LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 1:1; 2:10-11; 2 Kings 25:1-7

With this message we begin the life-study of 1 and 2 Kings. My burden in this life-study can be expressed by the following four statements:

1) David committed the greatest gross sin against God, and God forgave him after his repentance and gave him a son as God's beloved, although God still disciplined him for the sake of His righteousness.

2) Solomon insulted God with many idols through his many pagan wives and concubines, and because of this God cut away ten tribes from his kingdom but still left one tribe with him for David to have a lamp in Jerusalem.

3) The children of Israel forsook God and went after idols, so God dispersed them into all the nations yet, in His eternal love, would bring them back to their fathers' land in the last days.

4) God's being so gracious to David, Solomon, and Israel was to keep the lineage of Christ's genealogy that Christ might come into humanity and to keep a people to possess the land of Emmanuel that Christ may come to establish His kingdom on the earth.

I. THE INTRINSIC REVELATION OF THE BOOKS OF HISTORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT FROM JOSHUA TO ESTHER

This introductory word to the life-study of 1 and 2 Kings presents the intrinsic revelation of the books of history in the Old Testament. Such a revelation is necessary to get into the real significance of these books. Otherwise, we may regard these books merely as story books.

God promised Abraham that He would give him and his descendants Canaan as the good land. Through Moses He brought Israel as a people, the descendants of Abraham, out of Egypt through the wilderness to the border of the good land. After Moses, Joshua was used by God to bring His elect into the good land He had promised to them.

The intrinsic revelation of the history according to the record from Joshua to Esther is to unveil to us how the eternal economy of God was carried out by His elect on the earth. The eternal economy of God is altogether concerning Christ and for Christ, mainly in the person of Christ and the kingdom of Christ. Regarding the person of Christ, the record of history in the Old Testament keeps a lineage of the genealogy of Christ for His coming through His incarnation to be a man. Regarding the kingdom of Christ, the Old Testament history keeps a line on the kingdom of God for Christ to establish His divine kingdom on the earth. These two items form the governing line of the divine revelation in the books of the history of Israel. Now in 1 and 2 Kings this governing line must be realized by us for our study and understanding of these two books.

For the carrying out of His economy, God needs a people and a land. For Christ's person, there is the need of a people to be the lineage of His genealogy to bring Him into humanity. For Christ's kingdom, there is the need of a land. Although the earth was created by God, it has been usurped by Satan. Thus, God uses His people to gain a part of the Satan-usurped earth to serve as a "beachhead" for Him to set up His kingdom.

The Bible is not a book of history. The Bible is the record of the divine revelation concerning God's eternal economy, of which Christ is the center and reality. Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God, and the church is the organic Body of Christ. These two items are the basic structure of the Bible. So, in understanding any book of the Bible, we should hold this point of view, especially in the life-study of the books of Kings. Apparently, these two books are the history of the kings of Israel. Actually, they are books written in the

inspiration of the Spirit of God in the way of being related to God's eternal economy.

The first two kings, David and Solomon, are important types of Christ in two aspects. The first aspect is that of His suffering on earth, before His resurrection. From the time of His birth, He suffered. His life began in a manger in the lowest estate and ended in His being crucified on the cross. The manger and the cross were the two ends of His suffering life. David typifies this suffering Christ. David also suffered from his youth. Yet his suffering was for the conquering of the usurping enemies and the gaining of the good land, the ground for God's building. Solomon typifies the Christ glorified in the kingdom of God and its splendor. Solomon was glorified in the kingdom of Israel with the splendor of that kingdom. This is a prefigure of Christ in the millennium. These two types are strong evidences that the history of the kings of Israel is related to God's eternal economy, which concerns Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the organic Body of Christ.

II. THE MAIN STRIKING POINT OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS CONCERNING ISRAEL

The main striking point of these historical books concerning Israel is to show us in detail, in the way of typology, how to experience Christ as the good land given to us by God as our portion (Col. 1:12). First, the book of Joshua shows us how to gain, to take possession of, and to keep the good land. Then the books of Judges, Ruth, and 1 and 2 Samuel give us pictures of certain persons, showing us how they remained in the good land and enjoyed the good land after they took possession of it. The record of quite a few judges in the book of Judges, of Ruth and Boaz in the book of Ruth, and of Eli, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel presents us vivid pictures of how those persons remained in and enjoyed the good land. Even though those pictures were painted in detail, there is still the need of 1 and 2 Kings to give us pictures of more persons showing us how they remained in and enjoyed the good land.

Christ is the good land given to us by God, and we need

to enjoy this good land. We should ask ourselves how much we have enjoyed Christ. It is not sufficient simply to experience Christ; we must also enjoy Christ. Have you enjoyed Christ today? I can testify that today I have enjoyed Christ as my life supply, my strength, my living faith, my joy, and my peace.

III. THE TWO BOOKS OF KINGS PRESENTING US A FULL PICTURE OF THE DETAILS BY WHICH GOD'S ELECT REMAINED IN AND PARTICIPATED IN THE GOOD LAND

The two books of Kings present us a full picture of the details by which God's elect remained in and participated in the good land. It depicts, as an x ray, in detail, the character, the intention, the preferences, the habits, the morality, and the actions of all the kings as the descendants of David the king. By such a picture we can see that what we are, what we desire, what we intend to do, what we want, and how we behave ourselves have very much to do with our remaining in Christ and participating in all His unsearchable riches for our enjoyment. This picture concerning Israel ends with a tragedy of all the kings who were put into the blessed situation of the Davidic kingship and who were not faithful to God and did not take good care of their inheritance: they lost the good land and were carried away as captives to the idol-worshipping world. This should be a solemn alarm and warning to us in our relationship with Christ. If we are wrong in any of the matters mentioned above, we will suffer the loss of Christ as our enjoyment. I hope that we all will see this and be deeply impressed with it.

Christ is our good land, and we need to remain in this land, participate in it, and enjoy it. But the enjoyment of Christ has been very much neglected by the believers. For instance, many believers can testify that they have prayed and that their prayers have been answered by God. However, not many can say that in receiving an answer to their prayers they enjoyed Christ. This indicates we can pray and receive an answer without having any enjoyment of Christ.

IV. THE RECORD OF THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF 1 KINGS BEING CONSIDERED A CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF DAVID RECORDED IN 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

The record of the first two chapters of 1 Kings could be considered a conclusion of the history of David recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel. This is strong evidence that the historical books in the Old Testament were written in the way of unveiling God's economy, not merely in the way of the history of Israel. This is critical to us who are the students of the holy Scriptures. The entire Bible, although written by more than forty authors in sixty-six books, unveils to us only the unique economy of God, which He made for the accomplishment of His heart's desire, that is, to have Himself expressed and enlarged through Christ in His Divine Trinity. Such an accomplishment of God is more involved with the church in the New Testament than with Israel, God's elect, in the Old Testament and will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

V. 1 AND 2 KINGS BEING ONE BOOK IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

First and 2 Kings were one book in the Hebrew Scriptures, called The Books of the Kings.

VI. THE WRITERS

There is no evidence in these two books to indicate who the writers were. Some of the Jewish and Christian teachers suppose that Jeremiah might have been the writer.

VII. THE TIME

The history covered in these two books encompasses 426 years. The first book covers 118 years, from 1015 to 897 B.C., that is, from the decease of David (2:10) to the reign to Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, king of Israel (22:51). The second book covers 308 years, from 896 to 588 B.C., that is, from the reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel (3:1-3) to the captivity (25:1-7).

VIII. THE PLACE

The two books of Kings were probably written in Jerusalem.

IX. THE CONTENT

The content of these books is the history of Israel, God's elect, from the decease of David to the captivity of Israel to Babylon.

X. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of the books of Kings is God's governmental dealing, in God's economy, with the devastation and ruin of the divine kingship on the earth by the kings and the tragic issue of the just dealing of God, that is, the loss of the holy land, which was the base of God's kingdom on the earth, and the capture of the holy people who maintained the lineage of Christ's genealogy.

God desired to have a people for the bringing of Christ into humanity, and God needed a land for Christ to set up God's kingdom. Satan instigated the king of Babylon to conquer Israel to devastate the land and to carry away the people. It seemed that these two lines had ended, but in the genealogy in Matthew 1 we see that these two lines were continued even through the captivity. Eventually, Christ came into humanity through this lineage.

XI. THE SECTIONS

There are only two sections to the books of Kings: the old age and decease of David (1 Kings 1:1—2:11) and the reign of the kings (1 Kings 2:12—2 Kings 25:30).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWO

THE OLD AGE AND DECEASE OF DAVID

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 1:1—2:11

In this message we will consider the old age and decease of David.

I. BEING OLD AND FADING AWAY

David not only became old but was also fading away. To fade away is different from being old, which is common. David's life had a good beginning, like the bright sun rising, and his life with his career became like the sun shining at noon. However, his indulgence in lust spoiled his career and caused his bright life to fade like the sunset in the evening. In David's old age there was nothing bright, excellent, or splendid.

II. MAKING SOLOMON THE SUCCESSOR TO HIS THRONE

David made Solomon the successor to his throne (1:5-53). However, Solomon's source was David's indulgence of lust. Solomon's mother was the wife of Uriah, a Gentile leader of David's army. David murdered Uriah and took his wife. As David was appointing Solomon as his successor, he could not have felt glorious. David's appointing of Solomon was strong evidence of God's forgiveness and unlimited grace, but David nevertheless must have felt a sense of shame about it.

Joab, the captain of David's army, who participated in Uriah's murder, might never have lost his negative feeling about David's sin. It might have been because of this that Joab joined Adonijah in his rebellion. By this we can see that our sinning is not a light matter. It spoils everything. David's indulgence greatly spoiled his name, his position, and

even his ending. This was the fading, the sunset, of David's life.

David's indulgence became a seed which issued in the tragedy of the loss of the good land and the capture of the holy people. The effects of this tragedy have lasted even until today. This should serve as a warning to all the young people among us. We must not contact the other sex in a light way. As brothers and sisters in the church we cannot avoid contacting one another, but we must always keep a distance from the other sex. David's indulgence in sin began with just one look. His one glance caused him to fall to such an extent with such a tragic result.

A. Adonijah Struggling in the Way of Usurping to Be the Successor to the Throne of David

Adonijah, the son of Haggith and an older brother of Solomon of a different mother (2:22), struggled in the way of usurping to be the successor to the throne of David (1:5-10). His attempt to usurp the throne was an act of rebellion.

B. David's Decisive Declaration to Make Solomon the Successor to His Throne

In verses 11 through 31 we have an account of David's decisive declaration, in the midst of Adonijah's rebellion, to make Solomon his son the successor to his throne. Because of Solomon's origin, it was not easy for David to make such a declaration.

1. By the Wise Proposal of Nathan the Prophet

David's decisive declaration regarding Solomon was made by the help of the wise proposal of Nathan the prophet (vv. 11-14, 22-27). Whereas Joab joined Adonijah to rebel against David, Nathan strengthened him.

2. Through Bath-sheba's Intimate Entreating

David's decisive declaration that Solomon should be the successor to his throne was made also through Bath-sheba's intimate entreating (vv. 15-21, 28-31).

C. Solomon's Accession to the Throne of His Father as the Legal Successor to the Davidic Throne

Verses 32 through 40 speak of Solomon's accession to the throne of his father as the legal successor to the Davidic throne.

1. Ordained by David His Father

Solomon's accession was ordained by David his father (vv. 32-37). Regarding Solomon, David said, "Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel; and blow the trumpet and say, May King Solomon live!…He shall come and sit upon my throne, and he shall reign in my place; for I have appointed him as leader over Israel and over Judah" (vv. 34-35).

2. Carried Out by Zadok the Priest, Nathan the Prophet, and Benaiah the Captain of the Army

David's ordination concerning Solomon's succession was carried out by Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the captain of the army (vv. 38-40).

D. Adonijah's Surrender

Verses 41 through 53 describe Adonijah's surrender.

1. His Submission to and Begging of Solomon

Verses 41 through 52 speak of Adonijah's submission to and begging of Solomon. When Adonijah heard that David had made Solomon king, he took hold of the horns of the altar, saying, "Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not kill his servant with the sword" (v. 51).

2. Solomon's Acceptance and Pardon

Solomon accepted Adonijah and pardoned him (v. 53).

III. GIVING THE FINAL CHARGE TO SOLOMON HIS SON AS THE SUCCESSOR TO THE DAVIDIC THRONE

In 2:1-9 David gave the final charge to Solomon his son as the successor to the Davidic throne.

A. Charging Him to Be Strong and Be a Man

David charged Solomon to be strong and be a man (v. 2).

B. Charging Him to Walk in Jehovah's Ways and Keep His Commandments

David continued by charging Solomon to walk in Jehovah's ways and keep His commandments as written in the law of Moses, that he might prosper and that his throne might be established (vv. 3-4). However, as we will see, Solomon eventually became more indulgent than David. As a result, he did not prosper. Rather, he suffered and lost ten tribes of his kingdom.

C. Charging Him to End the Lives of Joab and Shimei and to Reward the Sons of Barzillai

Finally, in verses 5 through 9 David charged Solomon to end the lives of Joab, who helped Adonijah in his usurpation of the throne (1:7), and Shimei, who cursed David when he was escaping from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5-13), and to reward the sons of Barzillai, who supported David in the escape from Absalom's rebellion (17:27-29). David's concern here indicates that while he was on his deathbed he had no peace or comfort in his heart. His dealing with these persons was the issue of his indulgence in sin. God forgave him, but God's righteous judgment would not let him go.

IV. CEASING IN HIS LIFE ON EARTH

First Kings 2:10-11 speaks of David's ceasing in his life on earth. He was buried in the city of David (v. 10), after reigning over Israel for forty years: seven years in Hebron over Judah and thirty-three years in Jerusalem over the entire people of Israel (v. 11).

According to what David had done for Israel, the people should have taken action, at the time of his death, to remember him. However, contrary to what we might expect, the Bible does not give us a vivid record telling us that at his death the people expressed their appreciation of him.

Rather, the record of the end of David's life on earth is dim and gloomy. This indicates that the indulgence of David's lust spoiled his splendid life. Moreover, the sins committed by Solomon and the thirty-eight kings after him can be traced to David's indulgence. His one indulgence resulted in the loss of the God-given good land by his descendants and in the spoiling of God's chosen people.

Although the ending of David's life was sad, God's sovereignty nevertheless overcame Satan's subtlety. God still carried out the return from captivity in order to preserve fourteen generations of Christ's genealogy. By the return from captivity the good land was recovered. God still carried out His intention to bring Himself in His Trinity into humanity and to set up His spiritual kingdom.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE THREE

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

(1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 2:12—3:28

My burden in these messages on 1 and 2 Kings is concerned not with the historical facts but with the intrinsic revelation in these books. We can know the historical facts simply by our reading. However, to know the intrinsic revelation conveyed and hidden in the holy Word, we need a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). We need a spirit of revelation to see the intrinsic content of the holy Word and a spirit of wisdom to understand it, to interpret it, and even to present it to others.

In this message we will begin to consider the reign of Solomon. Those who know something about the Bible and even the worldly people appraise Solomon very highly. On the one hand, I also appreciate Solomon. On the other hand, because I have seen the intrinsic revelation in the Scriptures, I feel sorry for Solomon, who eventually had a great failure. He was a wise king, and the nations came to listen to his word of wisdom. The reign of Solomon was, therefore, a time of glory and splendor. But Solomon loved many foreign women; he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and he built worship places for them (1 Kings 11:1-8). Such a thing, which is beyond our understanding, led to the loss of the good land.

I. FORTY YEARS IN JERUSALEM

Solomon reigned forty years in Jerusalem, from 1015-975 B.C. (2:12—11:42).

II. THE ORIGIN OF SOLOMON

A. Begotten of David the King

Solomon was begotten of David the king (2 Sam. 12:24).

B. Born of Bath-sheba

Solomon was born of Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and, hence, most probably a Hittite herself (Matt. 1:6b), a Gentile woman.

C. A Very Sinful Source, Pardoned by God

The origin of Solomon was thus from a very sinful source, pardoned by God (2 Sam. 11:1—12:15a).

III. THE NAMES OF SOLOMON

Solomon had two names. The first, given by David, was Solomon, meaning "peaceable," "peaceful" (12:24a), indicating that David expected to have peace. Actually, he had no peace. In human history it is difficult to find a case like David's son Absalom's rebellion against his father. This was God's chastising hand over David. On the one hand, God forgave David, but on the other hand, He disciplined and chastised David according to His governmental righteousness.

Solomon's second name, Jedediah, given by God, means "beloved of Jehovah" (v. 25). On the one hand, God is righteous in His governmental dealing. On the other hand, God is loving and merciful, full of kindness, grace, and forgiveness. Solomon's second name indicates that he was loved by God.

IV. ENTHRONED

First Kings 1:32-48 tells us how Solomon was enthroned.

A. Ordained Legitimately by His Father King David

Solomon's enthronement was ordained legitimately by his father, King David (vv. 32-37). Concerning Solomon David declared, "He shall come and sit upon my throne, and he shall reign in my place; for I have appointed him as leader over Israel and over Judah" (v. 35).

B. Carried Out Officially by Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah

The enthronement of Solomon was carried out officially by Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the captain of the army (vv. 38-39).

C. Accepted Publicly by the People

Solomon's sitting upon the throne of the kingdom was accepted publicly by the people (vv. 40-47a).

D. Blessed with Worship to God by His Father David

Finally, the enthronement of Solomon was blessed with worship to God by his father David, the ordainer, who said, "Blessed by Jehovah, the God of Israel, who has given me today one to sit on my throne while my eyes may see it" (v. 48).

V. ENDING THE FACTORS OF REBELLION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS KINGDOM

In 2:12-46 we see that Solomon ended the factors of rebellion for the establishment of his kingdom.

A. Sentencing Adonijah to Death

Adonijah attempted to usurp the throne of David and was subdued and pardoned by Solomon (1:5-10, 41-53). After some time he asked Solomon to give him a certain woman as his wife, and Solomon rejected him and sentenced him to death (2:13-24). Solomon used that occasion as a chance to end Adonijah's life.

B. Discharging Abiathar from the Post of High Priest

Because Abiathar had joined the rebellion of Adonijah, Solomon discharged him from the post of high priest (vv. 26-27).

C. Sentencing Joab to Death

In verses 28 through 34 Solomon sentenced Joab to death. Joab was the captain of the army who helped Adonijah's

usurping of the throne of David and who killed the innocent captains of the armies, Abner and Amasa (1:7; 2:32). Solomon executed Joab according to his father David's charge (vv. 5-6, 28-34).

D. Appointing Benaiah as the Captain of the Army and Zadok as the High Priest

Next, Solomon changed the captain of the army and the high priest in favor of the family of David by appointing Benaiah as captain of the army to replace Joab, and Zadok as the high priest to replace Abiathar (v. 35).

E. Sentencing Shimei to Death

Finally, Solomon ended the factors of rebellion by sentencing Shimei to death (vv. 36-46a). Shimei cursed David when he was escaping from his son Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 16:5-13). Shimei later repented to David when David settled Absalom's rebellion, and David pardoned him (19:16-23). Solomon dealt with Shimei according to his father David's charge (1 Kings 2:36-38, 8-9). Shimei broke the oath he made to Solomon, and Solomon put him to death (vv. 39-46a).

F. The Kingdom Being Established in the Hand of Solomon

After all the factors of rebellion had been cleared up, the throne of Solomon was fully established. Thus, the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon (vv. 46b, 12).

VI. MARRYING THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF EGYPT

Solomon married the daughter of the king of Egypt (3:1). In doing this he followed his father in indulging his lust to gain a Gentile wife.

A. The Breaking of the Separation of God's Holy People from the People of Satan's Cosmos

This was the breaking of the separation of God's holy people from the people of Satan's cosmos—the evil world.

B. Not Regulated and Restricted by the Law of God

In marrying the daughter of the king of Egypt, Solomon was not regulated and restricted by the law of God. In Exodus 34:16, Deuteronomy 7:3, and Joshua 23:12 God charged Israel not to marry the Gentiles, because the Gentiles would cause them to worship idols. But Solomon openly broke this ordinance of God.

C. Disobedient to God in Carrying out God's Economy

In this matter Solomon was disobedient to God in carrying out God's economy. God's economy included wiping out all the idol-worshipping Gentiles in the land. It was therefore not reasonable for Solomon to marry the daughter of a Gentile king.

D. A Sign of Indulgence in the Lust of the Flesh

Solomon's marrying an Egyptian was a sign of indulgence in the lust of the flesh.

E. Laying a Foundation for His Future Fall

Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian also laid a foundation for his future fall in corruption and ruin.

VII. SEEKING FOR GOD

A. Loving Jehovah and Walking in the Statutes of David His Father

One very positive point concerning Solomon was his seeking for God (1 Kings 3:2-4). He loved Jehovah and walked in the statutes of David his father (v. 3a).

B. Sacrificing and Burning Incense in the High Places

On the one hand, Solomon was seeking God. On the other hand, he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places (vv. 3b-4; cf. Deut. 12:5-14). In the Old Testament "high places" is a negative term, for it refers to the places where

the Gentile people, the Canaanites, worshipped their idols. In this matter Solomon was foolish and lacking in vision.

VIII. SEEKING FOR WISDOM

First Kings 3:5-15 describes Solomon's seeking for wisdom.

A. Jehovah Appearing to Him in a Dream

Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream and promised to give him whatever he would ask (v. 5).

B. Asking Jehovah to Give Him Wisdom and an Understanding Heart to Judge God's People

Solomon asked Jehovah to give him wisdom and an understanding heart to judge God's people (vv. 6-9). Wisdom is a matter in our spirit, and understanding is a matter in our mind. The expression "an understanding heart" (v. 9) actually refers to an understanding in our mind because the mind is the main part of the heart. Quite often we may have wisdom in our spirit but are lacking the capacity to understand in our mind. Thus, we need God's wisdom in our spirit and God's understanding in our mind.

C. His Request Pleasing God

Solomon asked God not for prosperity nor for longevity but for wisdom that he might know how to behave himself among God's people for God's kingdom. Solomon's request pleased God, and God promised to give him a heart of wisdom and understanding (vv. 10-12). In addition, God promised to give him riches and glory and longevity, things for which he did not ask (vv. 13-14).

D. Solomon Understanding Where He Should Offer to God

Through this dream in which God appeared to him, Solomon understood where he should offer to God. He did this after he went back to Jerusalem, and he made a feast for all his servants (v. 15).

IX. JUDGING THE CASE OF THE TWO HARLOTS' QUARRELING

In verses 16 through 28 Solomon judged the case of the two harlots' quarreling about the genuine motherhood of a son (vv. 16-22). Solomon decided to cut the son into two pieces and give a peace to each (vv. 23-25). By his judgment the genuine mother and the false one were exposed (vv. 26-27). Such a wise judgment convinced all Israel and caused them to respect Solomon because they saw that the wisdom of God was within him (v. 28).

Solomon became a man of wisdom and also a man of understanding. However, because he took many pagan women and worshipped their idols and built places for the people to worship idols, he lost his God-given wisdom and his God-given understanding. He became very foolish and brought in damage to his kingdom.

Such a history indicates to us that God's dealing with His people is very strict and very detailed. God deals with each of us in a strict, detailed way. We should not forget that whatever we do is the sowing of a seed. There will be a result, an outcome, of what we sow. Even a little negligence will produce a result. Thus, we must learn to fear God.

It is true that God is loving, kind, full of grace, and full of forgiveness. However, He is also the righteous God, and He is righteous in a detailed way. If we do not act in the way God wants us to act, He will have no chance to make His home in our hearts. Our doing, our behaving, affects God in His dealing with us. Therefore, we all need to be very careful in our behavior. We need to learn the lesson not to speak a wrong word or an idle word. We are people in God's hands, even in God Himself. God will not be careless in dealing with us but will be very careful. So we must learn to be careful, even in small things.

Because the kings all did wrong things, their enjoyment in the good land was cut off. Today we also are kings, reigning with Christ. Our intentions, desires, character, habits, and behavior affect our enjoyment of Christ. Because we are kings, for us to be cut off from the enjoyment of Christ means that we are cut off from the top enjoyment of Christ, and will

cause us to lose our kingship. Thus, we must be careful, even in the smallest thing. We should walk according to the spirit in everything (Rom. 8:4).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE FOUR

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

(2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 4—5

In this message we will continue to consider the reign of Solomon.

X. THE ORGANIZATION OF HIS GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

First Kings 4:1-19 describes the organization of Solomon's governmental administration.

A. The Officials

The officials included the priest, the scribes, the recorder, the captain over the army, the high priests, the overseer of the superintendents, the principal officer, the head of the household service, and the head of the forced labor (vv. 2-6).

B. The Twelve Superintendents over All Israel

Solomon had twelve superintendents over all Israel (vv. 7-19). Each provided food for the king and his house for one month of the year (v. 7). Two among them were the sons-in-law of Solomon (vv. 11, 15).

XI. HIS PROSPERITY UNDER THE RICH BLESSING OF GOD

In 4:20—5:18 we have an account of Solomon's prosperity under the rich blessing of God. Solomon's splendid kingdom was a type of Christ's kingdom in the millennium. During the millennium all the nations will come to Christ.

A. His People Judah and Israel Increasing and Enjoying a Life of Peace, Riches, and Pleasure

His people Judah and Israel were increasing and enjoying a life of peace, riches, and pleasure. Verse 20 tells us that Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is by the sea in multitude, eating, drinking, and rejoicing. Verse 25 goes on to say that throughout Solomon's days Judah and Israel dwelt securely, "every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba."

B. His Dominion Extending from the Great River Euphrates to the Land of the Philistines and to the Border of Egypt

Solomon's dominion extended from the great river Euphrates to the land of the Philistines (at the seashore of the Mediterranean) and to the border of Egypt as the fulfillment of the promise of God to His elect Israel (Gen. 15:18; Exo. 23:31; Deut. 11:24), and all the nations brought tribute to him (1 Kings 4:21, 24). This was a positive factor for the people to regard Solomon and accept him.

C. The Twelve Tribes Providing the Daily Necessities of Him and His Vast Family

The twelve tribes of Israel provided the daily necessities of Solomon and his vast family (vv. 22-23, 27-28). This family included Solomon's one thousand wives and concubines with all their dependents. Eventually the requirement to provide these daily necessities became a factor in the people's rejection of Solomon, a "kingly robber." Solomon lost the kingdom partly due to his indulgence in lust and idol worship and partly because the people were burdened by the need to provide for Solomon's vast family.

D. His Army

Solomon's army included 40,000 horses for his chariots and 12,000 cavalrymen (v. 26).

E. His God-given Wisdom Making Him Great in the World in His Days

In verses 29 through 34 we see that Solomon's God-given wisdom made him great in the world in his days. God gave him very much understanding and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the seashore (v. 29). Solomon, therefore, had a large heart. According to verses 30 and 31 his wisdom surpassed that of all the wise men of the east and of Egypt, including Ethan (Psa. 89 title) and Heman (Psa. 88 title), the Ezrahites. In his wisdom Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). Furthermore, he discoursed about trees, from the largest, the cedar in Lebanon, to the smallest, the hyssop out of the wall; he discoursed also about animals, birds, creeping things, and fish (v. 33). From all the peoples men came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and from all the kings who had heard of his wisdom (v. 34).

Solomon's wisdom was absolutely in the physical realm, without any spiritual element. His wisdom was altogether different from the wisdom of Paul. Paul's wisdom was a spiritual wisdom concerning Christ making His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17), our walking and having our being according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4), and the two spirits—the divine Spirit and the human spirit (v. 16). Today, God the Spirit is the all-inclusive Spirit, the compound Spirit, the life-giving Spirit, the indwelling Spirit, the anointing Spirit, the revealing Spirit, and the consummated Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God.

F. Receiving Aid from a Gentile King

First Kings 5:1-18 tells us that Solomon received aid from a Gentile king, Hiram of Tyre, through an alliance according to a treaty.

1. Being Provided with Cedar Timber and Cypress Timber for the Building of God's Temple

Solomon was provided with cedar timber and cypress timber by Hiram for the building of God's temple (vv. 1-12). Hiram offered this aid because of Solomon's God-given wisdom

(vv. 7, 12). Solomon paid for Hiram's laborers and sent his laborers to help Hiram (vv. 6, 11).

2. Being Helped in Preparing Great and Costly Stones for the Building of the Temple

Solomon was helped by Hiram also in preparing great and costly stones for the building of the temple (vv. 13-18). Solomon sent 30,000 levied forced laborers, 70,000 burden bearers, 80,000 stonecutters, and 3,300 chief officers to cooperate with Hiram's builders. The Gebalites (a people in the territory of Lebanon) participated in the preparation of the timber and the stones (v. 18).

We should not overly appreciate Solomon's glory. The Lord Jesus said of the lilies of the field, "I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these" (Matt. 6:29), and Peter said, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass has withered, and the flower has fallen off" (1 Pet. 1:24). Solomon himself eventually admitted that what he had and did was vanity of vanities (Eccl. 1:2).

In order that we may have the proper appreciation of Solomon, I would like to point out that the Bible is composed of two sections. The first section, the Old Testament, contains types, shadows, and figures. The reality of the types, shadows, and figures is in the second section, the New Testament. Solomon's wisdom was a shadow of the real wisdom which was to come.

In the transition period between these two sections, the Lord Jesus said, "Among those born of women there has not arisen one greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11). John the Baptist, a pioneer of the New Testament age, was greater than Solomon, but as New Testament believers we are greater still. This means that, in God's economy, we are greater than Solomon. No matter how much God did for Solomon and how much He gave him, Solomon did not have God Himself wrought into him. But we have God in Christ wrought into us that we might be the same as God in life

and in nature. We may not have what Solomon had outwardly as a type, but within us there is a reality—the very God in Christ who has wrought Himself into our being. We may regard ourselves as insignificant, but we have God in Christ wrought into us. As those who have been born of God to be God's children, God's kind, members of God's family, we have become God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead). We were born into mankind, but we have been regenerated, transformed, and uplifted to be another kind. We are not just men in the new creation; we are God-men.

At the time of Matthew 11, the disciples could not have fully understood the Lord's word concerning John the Baptist. Later He told them that the Spirit of reality would come and disclose all things to them (John 16:12-15). The mysteries of God's economy were disclosed mainly to Paul (Eph. 3:3-5). This is why the writings of Paul occupy such a large part of the New Testament. Today, if we would know the highest wisdom in the universe, we must come to Paul's Epistles. We must get into the intrinsic significance of the revelation of the Bible, especially the crystallization of the truths in Paul's Epistles. The real wisdom is God, and God is embodied in Christ, who has become our wisdom to be in us (1 Cor. 1:24, 30), making us one with God and making us God in life and in nature. What a wisdom this is!

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE FIVE

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

(3)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 6—7

XII. BUILDING THE TEMPLE OF GOD WITH HIS OWN PALACES

In chapters six through eight we have an account of Solomon's building the temple of God with his own palaces. The temple was a type of Christ and also of the Body of Christ.

A. Beginning in the Four Hundred Eightieth Year after Israel Came out of Egypt

The building of the temple, the house of Jehovah, began in the four hundred eightieth year after Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 1012 B.C. (6:1). How patient our God is! He brought a people out of Egypt with the intention to build up His kingdom and His home, the temple. But His elect did not cooperate with Him; therefore, He could not accomplish this until the time of David. This is why David was so pleasant to God; he was a man according to God's heart. God's heart was on His kingdom with His home. However, there was not a person who would take care of God's heart's desire until David. David was a man according to God's desire to build up a kingdom and to have a house built up for Himself on the earth. Although this building began in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, everything for the building up of the temple was prepared by David.

B. On the Ground of Mount Zion

The temple was built on the ground of Mount Zion, which

was called Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen. 22:2) and David offered his sacrifice to Jehovah (1 Chron. 21:18—22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1). By this we can see that the Bible is a record concerning God's economy. Isaac was a type of Christ, who was crucified on the same mount where Isaac was offered to God.

C. According to the Promise of Jehovah Given to David

Solomon's building of the temple was according to the promise of Jehovah given to David (2 Sam. 7:12-13; 1 Kings 5:5).

D. According to His Father King David's Charge

Solomon built the temple according to his father King David's charge (1 Chron. 22:6-11). This indicates that Solomon did nothing in a light way but did everything according to his father's instructions.

E. With the Materials Prepared by His Father David

Solomon built the temple with the materials prepared by his father David (1 Chron. 22:14-16).

F. According to the Design Given by God to David

Solomon did not build the temple according to his wise mind. Rather, he built it according to God's own design given to David (1 Chron. 28:11-19).

G. The Materials for the Building of God's Temple and All Its Furniture and Their Significances in Typology

All the materials for the building of God's temple and all its furniture have their significance in typology.

1. Gold

Gold signifies God's divine nature, divinity (1 Kings 6:20-22).

2. Wood

The different kinds of wood signify different aspects of Christ's humanity.

a. Cedar

Cedar signifies Christ's humanity in resurrection, the resurrected Christ (vv. 9, 10b, 15a, 16).

b. Cypress

Cypress signifies Christ's humanity in His death, the crucified Jesus (vv. 15b, 34).

c. Olive Wood

Olive wood signifies Christ's humanity in the Spirit of God, the anointed Christ (vv. 23, 31-33).

3. Costly Stones

Costly stones signify Christ's humanity in transformation, the transformed Christ (vv. 7, 36; 5:17). Not only do we need transformation; Christ also needed transformation. As God, Christ in His incarnation put on man's flesh. The Word became flesh (John 1:14). Having become a man in the flesh, Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). He therefore needed transformation in His human part.

4. Bronze

Bronze signifies Christ under God's judgment, the judged Christ (1 Kings 7:15-16, 27, 30).

H. The Main Items of the Building and Their Significances in Typology

The main items of the building also have their significances in typology.

1. The Temple

The temple replaced the tabernacle as God's dwelling on earth (6:1-2).

a. Signifying the Incarnated Christ as God's Dwelling on the Earth

The temple first signifies the incarnated Christ as God's dwelling on the earth (John 2:19-21; 1:14; Matt. 12:6).

b. Signifying the Church

The temple also signifies the church, including all the believers, the members of Christ, as the enlargement of Christ to be God's dwelling on the earth (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21-22). The temple signifies both Christ and the church because the church and Christ are one. Christ is the Head and the church is the Body. The Body is the enlargement of the Head for God's dwelling. Hence, for God to dwell in Christ is for God to dwell in the church.

c. Its Size

The size of the temple was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high (1 Kings 6:2). We should compare this with the size of the tabernacle—thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high (Exo. 26:16-23).

d. Its Windows for Air and Light

The windows of the temple were for air and light, signifying the life-giving Spirit's fellowship bringing the spiritual air and the divine light (1 Kings 6:4a).

e. Its Fixed Lattices

Its fixed lattices were for keeping the windows open and the negative things away (v. 4b). This signifies the fellowship of the life-giving Spirit keeping the opening for the divine communication and protecting the room from the invasion of all negative matters and things.

f. The Front Portico

The front portico of the temple, a space to receive people (v. 3), signifies the opening, the accepting, and the receiving of the temple to the people (like the lobby of a magnificent building).

g. The Outer Temple, the Holy Place

The outer temple, the Holy Place, signifies the soul of the believers as God's temple sanctified unto God (v. 5a).

h. The Innermost Sanctuary, the Holy of Holies

The innermost sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, signifies the spirit of the believers as God's temple, the same in its three dimensions, as is the New Jerusalem, the largest form of the Holy of Holies (vv. 5b, 16, 20; Rev. 21:16).

i. The Side Chambers

The side chambers signify the unsearchable riches of Christ becoming His extension as His fullness (1 Kings 6:5c). As believers in Christ, we are the temple and we are also the side chambers, the extension of Christ as His fullness.

1) In Three Stories

The side chambers were in three stories, signifying being in the Triune God and in Christ's resurrection (v. 6).

2) Their Widths

The width of the first story was five cubits; the second, six cubits; and the third, seven cubits (v. 6). This signifies that the higher the church as Christ's fullness goes, the wider it is.

3) Their Door

The door of the side chambers signifies the communication, the fellowship, of the church as the fullness of Christ (v. 8a). The side chambers were separate, but there was a door for communication. If there had been no door, that would have indicated autonomy. Today, some local churches either have no doors or they close their doors. They cut off fellowship between the churches. The wider the door, the richer the fellowship. Hence, all the local churches as chambers of Christ should widen their doors.

4) The Winding Stairs

The winding stairs signify that the way to get into the church as the fullness of Christ is spiral without corners (v. 8b). This indicates that the fellowship between the churches should not have corners. Rather, the fellowship should continue to go up and up by a spiral stairway, like the street in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1). In the New Jerusalem, from the mount where God's throne is, a river flows down the street in the form of a spiral to reach all the twelve gates.

j. Its Two Bronze Pillars

The temple's two bronze pillars signify the Christ judged by God becoming the supporting strength of God's dwelling on the earth (1 Kings 7:15-22).

k. Its Inner Court

The inner court of the temple (6:36) signifies the separation through God's sanctification from the common world (in which were the bronze altar and the bronze sea).

1) Built with Three Courses of Hewn Stones

The inner court was built with three courses of hewn stones, signifying the crucified Christ in His resurrection.

2) Built with One Course of Cedar Beams

The inner court was built also with one course of cedar beams, signifying the resurrected Christ in His humanity.

3) Becoming the Separating Wall

The inner court built with hewn stones and cedar beams became the separating wall as a line separating the dwelling of God from the common world.

2. The Bronze Sea with Ten Bronze Lavers

The bronze sea with ten bronze lavers signifies the convicting, judging, and renewing Spirit of God washing away, based on the death of Christ, all the negative things from those participating in the dwelling of God on earth

(7:23-40; John 16:8; Titus 3:5). Solomon also built an altar of bronze (1 Kings 9:25), but it is not listed here.

3. The Golden Table for the Bread of the Presence

The golden table for the bread of the presence signifies the Christ who has gone through the processes of incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension and has become the life-giving Spirit to be the spiritual food of God's elect (7:48b; John 6:32-63).

4. The Golden Lampstands

The golden lampstands signify the Christ who has become the life-giving Spirit through His resurrection to be the divine light to His people (1 Kings 7:49; John 8:12).

5. The Golden Altar with Its Incense

The golden altar with its incense signifies the resurrected and ascended Christ to be the sweet savor for God's acceptance of His redeemed (1 Kings 7:48a; Rev. 8:3).

There is no mentioning in the list in 1 Kings 6 and 7 of the building of the ark of the covenant because Solomon still kept the ark of the covenant made by Moses (6:19; 8:3-9).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE SIX

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

(4)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 7:1-12; 8:1-66

In this message we will continue to consider Solomon's building the temple of God with his own palaces.

I. His Palaces Built in Association with God's Dwelling

Solomon built his palaces in association with God's dwelling (7:1-12).

1. Built with the Same Materials as Those for the Temple

Solomon's palaces were built with the same materials as those for the temple. This indicates that his palaces were on the same rank as God's dwelling. God's dwelling was for God to be worshipped by His people. Solomon's palaces were for him to administrate his government over the people. Solomon's government was the governmental administration of God over His people.

2. Indicating That God's Government Should Go Along with His Worship

The fact that Solomon's palaces were built in association with God's dwelling indicates that God's government over His people should go along with His worship by His people.

3. The Typology and the New Testament Reality

In typology the king's palaces and God's temple were separate, whereas in the New Testament reality these two are one building. We, the New Testament believers, are on

the one hand God's priests to serve, to worship, God and on the other hand God's kings to reign for God.

J. The Dedication of the Temple

Chapter eight is concerned with the dedication of the temple.

1. The Tabernacle Being Merged with the Temple

Verses 1 through 11 show us that the tabernacle was merged with the temple.

a. The Tabernacle Being a Portable Precursor

The tabernacle was a portable precursor moving through the wilderness.

b. The Temple Being a Consummation of God's Building in Typology

The temple was a consummation of God's building in typology built upon Mount Zion, a peak of Mount Moriah.

c. The Glory of Jehovah Filling the Temple

The glory of Jehovah filled the temple (cf. Exo. 40:34), bringing the God who is in the heavens to the earth and joining the earth to the heavens. This should be our situation today.

In Genesis 28 Jacob had a dream and he called that place Bethel, meaning "the house of God." There heaven came down to the earth and the earth was joined to heaven by the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream. This ladder was a type of Christ who, as the Son of Man, keeps heaven open to earth and joins earth to heaven (John 1:51). Today the heavenly God comes down to the earth and the earth is joined to God by the very Christ who dwells in us.

2. His Blessing and Declaration to the People

Solomon's blessing and declaration to the people were related to God's dwelling in the deep darkness and to God's promise to David that his son would build a house for God (1 Kings 8:12-21).

3. His Prayer

Verses 22 through 53 are a record of Solomon's prayer. My burden here is that we would see the intrinsic significance of this prayer. If we would apprehend the intrinsic significance of Solomon's prayer, we need spiritual wisdom and spiritual revelation.

a. Asking God to Pay Constant Attention to the House He Built for God

In his prayer Solomon asked God to pay constant attention to the house he built for God (vv. 22-29).

b. Supplicating God to Hear from His Dwelling Place in the Heavens

Solomon supplicated God to hear from His dwelling place in the heavens the prayers offered to Him by His people toward this dwelling place of His on the earth that Solomon had prepared for God. Here we see that God has two dwelling places—one in the heavens and one on earth. Actually, these two are one, for they are the two ends of God's dwelling place. One end is in the heavens, and the other is on earth. Today, as believers in Christ, we are a particular people, a people who are in the heavens and on earth, on earth and in the heavens.

1) In Judging God's People

Solomon supplicated God to hear the prayers of his people in a very definite way, mentioning seven conditions concerning God's listening to the prayers of His elect. First, Solomon asked God to hear in judging His people, condemning the wicked and justifying the righteous (vv. 31-32). God exercises His ruling among His people according to His justice; that is, He condemns the wicked and justifies the righteous.

2) In the Defeat of His People

Solomon went on to ask God that when His people were defeated, He would hear their supplication from the heavens

and bring them back to the land He gave to their fathers (vv. 33-34).

3) In Drought

Solomon continued by praying that in drought God would forgive His people's sin and bring rain upon His land, which He had given to His people for an inheritance (vv. 35-36).

4) In Famine and Pestilence

Next, Solomon prayed that during a time of famine and pestilence God would forgive and bring to each man according to all his ways (vv. 37-40).

5) Concerning the Seeking Gentile Stranger

Concerning the seeking Gentile stranger, Solomon prayed that God would act according to all that the foreigner would call upon Him for (vv. 41-43).

6) In His People's Being Sent into Battle

In verses 44 and 45 Solomon prayed that if God's people were sent into battle, God would hear their prayer and maintain their cause. For God to maintain the cause of His people means that He executes justice regarding their situation.

7) In the Captivity of His People

Solomon prayed even concerning the future captivity of God's people (vv. 46-53). He prayed that in the captivity of His people Jehovah would hear His people's prayer and maintain their cause when they would return to Him with all their heart and with all their soul and pray to Him toward the land that He had given to their fathers, toward the city that He had chosen, and toward the house that Solomon had built for His name, that they could be separated from all the peoples of the earth to be His inheritance.

In the last of the seven conditions concerning God's listening to the prayers of His elect, three things are stressed (v. 48): the holy land, typifying Christ as God's allotted portion to the believers (Col. 1:12); the holy city, signifying the

kingdom of God in Christ; and the holy temple, signifying God's house, the church, on the earth. These three things—the holy land, the holy city, and the holy temple—are the three crucial things regarding God's economy. During the Babylonian captivity Daniel prayed for the holy land, the holy city, and the holy temple three times a day by opening his window toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). This indicates that God will listen to our prayer in the way that our prayer to God must be toward Christ, the kingdom of God, and the house of God as the goal in God's eternal economy.

The holy land, the holy city, and the holy temple are all types of Christ. Christ is our good land; Christ is our city, our kingdom; and Christ is the temple, God's dwelling place. Today, our prayers should be aimed at the holy land, the holy city, and the holy temple. This means that our prayers should be aimed at the interest of God, that is, at Christ and the church as God's interest on earth.

The spiritual significance of God's interest is Christ Himself. This indicates that no matter for whom we are praying, our prayer must be aimed at Christ as God's interest. We need to pray for the saints, but we should not aim our prayers at them. On the one hand we pray for them, but on the other hand we pray for them because of God's interest. If in our prayer we aim at the one for whom we pray, this will bring in the enemy's attack. This is a spiritual strategy in the spiritual warfare.

We need to remember that prayer involves three parties: we, God, and Satan. Sometimes when we pray for a certain person, Satan comes to attack him, and his situation becomes worse. The reason for this is that our interest is in that person, not in God's economy. No matter for whom we are praying, we should aim our prayer at God's Christ, who is God's interest in His economy.

To pray properly, we must pray to God in the name of the Lord Jesus (John 16:24), aiming at God's interest for His economy. By the expression "in the name of the Lord Jesus" I do not mean any traditional form of prayer. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray for the interest of God on earth, which is Christ as God's portion to us, as God's kingdom, and

as God's dwelling place. Our prayer should be altogether for God's interest to fulfill God's economy.

4. His Blessing to the People

Solomon's blessing to the people was that God would not forsake them nor abandon them but rather maintain the cause of His people as each day required, and that the people would have a perfect heart with Jehovah, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments as on that day (1 Kings 8:54-61).

In verse 59 Solomon said, "Let these words of mine, with which I made supplication to Jehovah, be near to Jehovah our God day and night to maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel as each day requires." Throughout the centuries God has maintained the cause of His people Israel, exercising His justice for them. When they were wrong with Him, He chastised them and disciplined them through the hands of the Gentile powers, including the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. But when these nations went too far in dealing with Israel, God maintained Israel's cause, punishing those who mistreated them.

Behind the physical realm there is the spiritual realm in which God governs the entire universe, executing justice for His people every day as each day requires. God does this for His elect, both for Israel and for the believers in Christ. When His elect make mistakes and offend Him, He will discipline them, using others as an instrument for chastening. At the same time, He maintains the cause of His elect by executing justice upon those who persecute them. For example, Hitler killed millions of Jews without a cause, but God came in to execute His justice over Hitler and to maintain the cause of Israel.

5. He and the People Offering a Vast Quantity of Sacrifices to God

After Solomon blessed the people, he and the people offered a vast quantity of sacrifices as the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering to God (vv. 62-64). The burnt offering is for God's pleasure; the meal offering is for God's

satisfaction; and the peace offering is for God and His people to be one in peace.

6. He and the People Holding a Feast for Fourteen Days

Solomon and the people held a feast for seven days and seven more days, fourteen days in all. Then he sent the people away, and the people blessed him as their king and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness which Jehovah had done to David and Israel His people (vv. 65-66).

K. The Spiritual Significance, in Typology, of Solomon and the Temple He Built for God

Solomon typifies Christ (Matt. 12:42) in speaking God's word of wisdom (13:35) and in building the church as the temple of God (16:18; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22), and the temple typifies Christ (Matt. 12:6) and the church as the unique building of God in the universe. These two—Christ and His Body, the church—are the center, the reality, and the goal of God's eternal economy.

Since Solomon and the temple built by him play the strongest roles in the history of Israel and occupy a wide realm in such a history, they are the strong evidence that the history of Israel concerns very much the fulfillment of God's eternal economy in the Old Testament in the way of typology. If our study of such a history is detached from the economy of God, our study will be a labor in vain. That Christ and the church are the centrality and universality of God's economy is universal in both the New Testament and the Old Testament. We need to see clearly that the books of history were written from the point of view of God's eternal economy concerning Christ and the church.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE SEVEN

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

(5)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 9—11

We, the believers in Christ, are the greatest people in the universe. We have received God into us, and He is continuously working Himself into our constitution to make us God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead). According to Romans 5:17, we reign in the life which we have received. To be today's overcomers we must reign as kings in life. If we do not, we will lose the top portion of the enjoyment of Christ and will be chastised by the Lord in the coming age. We all have to mature sooner or later. If we mature in this age, we will reign as kings in life in this age and will be the co-kings with Christ in the next age to rule over the nations. We need to keep this in mind as we consider what is revealed in 1 Kings 9—11 regarding the reign of Solomon.

XIII. THE HIGHEST PEAK OF SOLOMON'S GLORY AMONG THE NATIONS

First Kings 9 and 10 show us the highest peak of Solomon's glory among the nations.

A. Jehovah Accepting Solomon's Prayer

Jehovah accepted Solomon's prayer and promised him that He would establish his throne forever (9:1-9). Here we see that it was God who made Solomon prosperous.

B. Solomon's Alliance with Hiram Being Established in Their Mutual Giving of Gifts

Solomon's alliance with Hiram was established in their mutual giving of gifts to each other (vv. 10-14). This was a

great strengthening and help from the human side. Thus, in addition to the strengthening on the divine side, there was the strengthening on the human side.

C. Solomon Building Further Cities, Levying the Canaanites as Forced Labor, and Making the Children of Israel Men of War, Servants, Officers, and Captains

Solomon built further cities, levying the Canaanites as forced labor, and he made the children of Israel men of war, his servants, his officers, his captains, and his officers over his chariots and his horsemen (vv. 15-24).

D. Solomon Three Times a Year Offering Burnt Offerings and Peace Offerings

Three times a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he built to Jehovah and burned incense with the offerings on the golden altar which was before Jehovah. Thus he finished the building of the temple (v. 25).

There were two altars: the bronze altar in the outer court of the temple and the golden altar inside the temple. The bronze altar was for the offering of the offerings; the golden altar was for the burning of the incense. The sweet savor of the incense burned at the golden altar, the incense altar, signifies Christ as our acceptance by God. The burning of the incense was based upon Christ as the offerings offered on the bronze altar. Whereas the bronze altar was the place for the accomplishment of Christ's redemption, the incense altar is the place for our acceptance by God based upon the redemption accomplished by Christ at the bronze altar.

E. Solomon Building Up a Navy

Solomon also built up a navy with the cooperation of Hiram to get the best gold, the gold of Ophir (vv. 26-28).

F. The Queen of Sheba Coming to Pay Her Honor to Solomon

The queen of Sheba came to pay her honor to Solomon and to listen to his words of wisdom (10:1-10, 13).

G. Hiram's Fleet Carrying Gold from Ophir and a Great Number of Almug Trees and Precious Stones to Solomon

Hiram's fleet carried gold from Ophir and a great number of almug trees and precious stones to Solomon for decorating the temple of God and his palace and for making musical instruments (vv. 11-12).

H. Solomon Being Enriched with the Tribute by the Kings of the Nations and the Tariff on the Traders and Merchants

Solomon was enriched with the tribute by the kings of the nations and the tariff on the traders and merchants, with which Solomon made small and large shields of gold for display and a large ivory throne overlaid with the finest gold for his splendor in his exaltation, putting them in the Lebanon Forest House (a place of luxury). He also made silver as plentiful as stones. Thus, he excelled all the kings of the earth not only in wisdom but also in wealth (vv. 14-25, 27).

I. Solomon Building a Defense of Chariots and Cavalrymen

Solomon, with his abundant wealth, built a defense of 1,400 chariots and 12,000 cavalrymen, the horses of which were bought from Egypt (vv. 26, 28-29).

XIV. THE TRAGEDY OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY

It seems that the whole world was for Solomon, but his glory was like the full moon which was about to wane. As we will see, the tragedy of Israel's history (ch. 11) was due to Solomon's indulgence of lust and worship of idols.

A. Solomon's Fall

In 11:1-8 we have a record of Solomon's fall.

1. In the Indulgence of His Lust

Solomon's fall was in his indulgence of his lust by loving many foreign women: 700 wives, who were princesses of the

kings of the nations, and 300 concubines, in addition to Pharaoh's daughter (vv. 1-3). In having so many wives and concubines Solomon was most foolish.

2. In Forsaking God and Worshipping the Gentile Idols

Solomon's fall was also in his forsaking God, who appeared to him twice (v. 9), and in worshipping the Gentile idols through the seducing of the foreign women he loved (vv. 4-8).

B. God's Chastisement

As a result of Solomon's fall, God's chastisement came in. After Solomon fell, God came in to punish and discipline him.

1. God Becoming Angry with Solomon

God became angry with Solomon and determined to tear the kingdom away from him and give it to his servant (vv. 9-13). However, for David's sake God would not do this in Solomon's days but in the days of his son (vv. 12, 34). Moreover, for David's sake and for the sake of Jerusalem, which God had chosen, God would still keep one tribe for the son of Solomon (vv. 13, 32-33, 35-36).

2. The Actions of God's Chastisements

In verses 14 through 40 we see the actions of God's chastisements. God raised up Hadad the Edomite to attack Solomon (vv. 14-22); He raised up Rezon, the king of Syria, to become another adversary to Solomon (vv. 23-25); and He raised up Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, to revolt against Solomon (vv. 26-40).

C. Solomon's Decease after Reigning over All Israel for Forty Years

Solomon's decease after reigning over all Israel for forty years (vv. 41-43) was in a gloomy disappointment. His glory fell off like the flower of grass (Matt. 6:29; 1 Pet. 1:24), and his splendid career became "vanity of vanities," as he had preached (Eccl. 1:2). However, what God did through him as a type of Christ remains forever. We, therefore, need to

discern between what Solomon was in his personal life and what he was as a type of Christ.

D. Solomon under the Light of the Spiritual Life

Under the light of the spiritual life, we can see that Solomon was a wise man but not a spiritual one; a man of capability, not one of life; a man whose wisdom was a gift, not a measure of life. The careers he accomplished were evidences of his capacity from the God-given gift of wisdom, not manifestations of the ability of the maturity of life.

In the Lord's recovery we should first take care of life. Then to some extent and in a certain sense we need capability. In the church our capability should be the manifestation of the maturity of life. Capability apart from life is like a snake, poisoning the church; life is like a dove, supplying the church with life. Instead of being today's Solomon, we should be "doves" with the proper measure of life.

Solomon's enjoyment of the God-given good land reached the highest level through his God-given gift. However, due to his dwarf measurement in the maturity of the spiritual life, he was cut off from the enjoyment of the good land in God's economy, in his unbridled indulgence of his lust in sex. His father David, a man according to God's heart, failed in this gross and ugly sin—the indulgence of sexual lust. Solomon's failure in this satanic temptation was much greater than his father's, beyond people's imagination. This caused him and his descendants to lose more than ninety percent of their kingdom and caused the people of God's elect to suffer division and confusions among themselves throughout quite a number of generations. They lost the God-given land and became captives in the foreign lands of idol worship. The nation of Israel is still suffering due to Solomon's failure. What a warning and an alarm this should be to us! We must be careful. Even a little failure in the indulgence of lust can damage the church and kill the splendid aspects of the church life.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE EIGHT

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL AND THE REIGNS OF REHOBOAM OVER JUDAH AND OF JEROBOAM OVER ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 11:9-13, 29-37; 12:1—14:31a

There are many different ways of understanding the Bible. Brother Nee said that the kind of Bible you have is according to the kind of person you are. Every denomination and group has its own way of understanding the Bible. The Pentecostals know the Bible in their way, interpreting it without any governing principles. Roman Catholics know the Bible according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The inner-life people understand the Bible in their particular way. Fifty years ago Brother Nee and I considered the Brethren teachings to be the best, and during the years I have often consulted John Nelson Darby's *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible.* But in the past few years, in preparing for the life-studies on Job and the books of history, I did not consult the Brethren teachings. In these years the Lord has shown us something higher and more profound—God's eternal economy, the center and reality of which are Christ as the embodiment of the processed Triune God and the church as the organic Body of Christ. For the carrying out of His economy, God is dispensing Himself into us.

The divine dispensing is revealed in the book of Ephesians. The Brethren stress God's choosing and predestinating us in Ephesians 1, yet they do not point out that God's selection and predestination are organic matters. Verse 4 says that God has chosen us in Christ to be holy. To be holy means to be God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. In the entire universe, only God is holy. God can make us

holy only by dispensing His holy nature—that is, His holy element—into our being. When God regenerated us, He dispensed Himself into us as the holy element. Verse 5 says that God predestinated us unto sonship. This means that God has predestinated us to be His sons by dispensing. According to Ephesians 1 the church is the issue of the Triune God's dispensing and the ascended Christ's transfusing. In the last ten years the Lord has brought me to understand the Bible in this way.

Nearly all fundamental teachings are good. We appreciate these teachings and have built upon them. However, they have also delayed us and veiled us. Many fundamental teachers have become contented with the fundamental teachings, and we also have become somewhat contented with our understanding of the Bible. If fundamental teachings become a tradition to us, we will not seek to improve our knowing of the Bible. Brother Nee was never content with these teachings. He always pioneered to see something further.

Our vision concerning the revelation of the Bible is that God wants to re-create man. Created man was not the goal of God's purpose but only a step. God created man with His hand; He will re-create man with His life. He put created man in front of the tree of life, indicating that He wanted to re-create man by regenerating man. Eventually, the regenerated man becomes Christ's bride and increase (John 3:29-30). Some Christians see regeneration in John 3, but they do not realize that in John 3 regeneration is for the producing of Christ's bride and increase. This shows that there are different levels in understanding the Bible.

With this in mind, let us now go on to consider the division of the kingdom of Israel and the reigns of Rehoboam over Judah and of Jeroboam over Israel.

I. THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

In 1 Kings 11:9-13, 29-37 we have an account of the division of the kingdom of Israel.

A. Due to the Fall and Corruption of Solomon

This division was due to the fall and corruption of Solomon

(vv. 9-13). In verse 11 Jehovah said to Solomon, "Because you have done this and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant."

B. The Kingdom of God's Elect Being Split into Two

The kingdom of God's elect was split into two: the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah, of one tribe (vv. 13, 36) and the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, of ten tribes (v. 35). Judah was genuine, but Israel was a division in apostasy.

II. THE REIGN OF REHOBOAM OVER JUDAH OF ONE TRIBE

The reign of Rehoboam over Judah was a reign over just one tribe (v. 43b; 12:1-24; 14:21-31a).

A. Rehoboam Being a Son of Solomon Born of an Ammonitess

Rehoboam, a son of Solomon, was born of an Ammonitess (14:21, 31).

B. Continuing the Reign after Solomon

Rehoboam continued the reign after Solomon (11:43b).

C. Suffering the Division of the Kingdom and Losing Ten Tribes

In 12:1-24 we see that Rehoboam suffered the division of the kingdom and lost ten tribes.

1. By the Rebellion of Jeroboam

a. Jeroboam Instigating the People's Revolt

The division of the kingdom and the loss of ten tribes were caused by Jeroboam's rebellion. There were certain factors in the heart of the people that caused them to rebel, and Jeroboam took advantage of these factors to instigate the people's revolt (vv. 1-3).

b. Taking Solomon's Extraordinary Luxurious Life and His Heavy Levying on the People as the Cause

Jeroboam took Solomon's extraordinary luxurious life and his heavy levying on the people as the cause of his rebellion (vv. 4-5).

c. The Foolishness of Rehoboam in Facing the Situation

Verses 6 through 15 show us the foolishness of Rehoboam in facing the situation. Rehoboam took counsel with the elders who had attended Solomon his father. However, he forsook their counsel and instead followed the counsel of the young men who had grown up with him, refusing Jeroboam's request to lighten the yoke that Solomon had placed upon them.

d. The Revolt Bursting Out

Verses 16 through 20 tell us that the revolt burst out. Israel rebelled against the house of David (v. 19) and they made Jeroboam king over all Israel (v. 20).

2. Rehoboam Struggling to Wage War against Jeroboam

Rehoboam struggled to wage war against Jeroboam, but he was stopped by God (vv. 21-24).

D. Enthroned when He Was Forty-one Years of Age and Reigning over Judah for Seventeen Years

Rehoboam was enthroned when he was forty-one years of age, and he reigned over Judah for seventeen years (14:21). Under his reign the people of Judah did evil in the sight of Jehovah, above all the sins which their fathers had committed, and provoked God to jealousy (vv. 22-24). In the fifth year of his reign, Rehoboam was defeated and robbed by the king of Egypt (vv. 25-28).

E. Fighting with Jeroboam Continually

Rehoboam fought with Jeroboam continually. When Rehoboam died he was buried with his fathers in the city of David (vv. 29-31a; 15:6).

III. THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM OVER ISRAEL OF TEN TRIBES

Jeroboam reigned over Israel of ten tribes (11:26-40; 12:1-20, 25-33; 13:1—14:20a).

A. Jeroboam Being an Able Servant of Solomon

Jeroboam was an able servant of Solomon (11:26-28).

B. Ordained by God to Reign over Ten Tribes of Israel

Jeroboam was ordained by God to reign over ten tribes of Israel (vv. 11-13).

C. Foretold by Ahijah the Prophet

The reign of Jeroboam was foretold by Ahijah the prophet (vv. 29-39). Ahijah took the new garment that was upon him and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself; for thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, I am now tearing the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and giving the ten tribes to you" (v. 31).

D. Solomon Seeking to Kill Jeroboam

Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, and Jeroboam fled to Egypt and stayed there until the death of Solomon (v. 40).

E. Instigating the Rebellion against King Rehoboam

As we have pointed out, Jeroboam instigated the rebellion against King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon (12:1-19).

F. Enthroned by the People of the Ten Tribes of Israel

Jeroboam was enthroned by the people of the ten tribes of Israel (v. 20).

G. The Apostasy of Jeroboam

In 12:25-33 and 13:33-34 we have an account of the apostasy of Jeroboam.

1. Making Two Calves of Gold and Putting One in Bethel and the Other in Dan

Jeroboam made two calves of gold, putting one in Bethel and the other in Dan, in order to distract his people from worshipping God in Jerusalem (12:25-30). God had ordained that His people come together three times a year in Jerusalem. Jeroboam was afraid that the ten tribes would return to their rightful king if they went to worship God in Jerusalem. Thus, he set up two worship centers, saying that it was not convenient to travel to Jerusalem. The excuse of convenience also is used to justify today's denominations. Jeroboam's apostasy broke God's ordination of having one unique worship center in the holy land for keeping the unity, the oneness, of the children of Israel (Deut. 12:2-18). This became a great sin and caused the people to worship idols.

2. Building a Temple at the High Places and Appointing Common People to Be Priests

Jeroboam built a temple at the high places and appointed priests from among the common people who were not of the tribe of Levi (1 Kings 12:31). Whereas God had ordained that the tribe of Levi would be the priests, Jeroboam appointed common people to be priests.

3. Ordaining a Feast like the Feast That Was in Judah

Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that was in Judah (v. 32a), doing what he had devised in his own heart. He might have told the people that it was not necessary for them to go to Jerusalem in order to have a feast.

4. Offering Sacrifices on the Altar at Bethel

Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar at Bethel to the calves that he had made, and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places (vv. 32b-33a).

5. Ordaining a Feast and Going Up to the Altar to Burn Incense

In his apostasy Jeroboam ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and, although he was not a priest, he went up to the altar to burn incense (v. 33b).

6. A Type of the Apostasy of Today's Christianity

The apostasy of Jeroboam in the above five items could be considered a type of the apostasy of today's Christianity.

H. God's Judgment on the Altar at Bethel Made by Jeroboam

First Kings 13:1-32 is a record of God's judgment on the altar at Bethel made by Jeroboam. This judgment was carried out by a man of God from Judah (vv. 1-10). This man of God was then deceived by an old prophet to take the way against God's commandment and was torn apart by a lion (vv. 11-32).

I. Ahijah's Prophecy concerning the Tragic Ending of Jeroboam

In 14:1-18 we have Ahijah's prophecy concerning the tragic ending of Jeroboam. Jeroboam sent his wife in disguise to see Ahijah the prophet in Shiloh, hoping to get some good news concerning his son Abijah (vv. 1-5). Instead of giving good news, Ahijah the prophet, in a prophecy from God, told the wife of Jeroboam that because of Jeroboam's evils in his apostasy, God would destroy Jeroboam and his whole family as a man sweeps dung until it is all gone (vv. 6-18).

J. Jeroboam Reigning Twenty-two Years over the Ten Tribes of Israel

Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years over the ten tribes of Israel. His life was ended by the severe punishment of God (vv. 19-20a).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE NINE

THE REIGNS OF ABIJAM AND ASA OVER JUDAH AND OF NADAB, BAASHA, ELAH, ZIMRI, AND OMRI OVER ISRAEL

AND THE REIGN OF AHAB OVER ISRAEL

(1)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 14:20b, 31b; chs. 15—16

Although we respect the fundamental teachings of the Bible, the New Testament shows us many things beyond the fundamental teachings. We are very much for the preaching of the gospel by visiting sinners to bring them into Christ. However, the goal of our preaching is not to "win souls" or to bring people to heaven but to create, to produce, members of Christ for the building up of His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

In doing this, our goal is to reach Zion, to have Zion today, for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy. Otherwise, God will have no way to fulfill His economy to consummate in the New Jerusalem. The last book of the New Testament sounds out the call to be overcomers (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and these overcomers will be Zion (14:1). This Zion will be the standard of what the New Jerusalem will be. In the new heaven and new earth, when the New Jerusalem comes in, Zion will disappear because the entire New Jerusalem will become Zion, with all the believers as overcomers. The church life in the Lord's recovery must go on and on until at least some of us, if not all, reach Zion.

If we love the Lord and His recovery and if we mean business to practice the church life in the recovery, we need to endeavor to see all the visions concerning God's economy,

the center and reality of which are Christ and the church. In the last ten years of my ministry, I have been struggling to reach this high point. This is why I do not like to touch the books of history in the Old Testament without seeing what is related to God's economy. In the history books Christ and the church are typified. As we continue our life-study of 1 and 2 Kings, we should pay our attention to these things.

First Kings 15 and 16 cover the reigns of Abijam and Asa over Judah and of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri over Israel and the beginning of the reign of Ahab over Israel. In this record there is confusion, which always comes out of division. Wherever division is, there is confusion.

I. THE REIGN OF ABIJAM OVER JUDAH

A. Born of the Daughter of Abishalom

Abijam was born of the daughter of Abishalom (15:2b).

B. Reigning Three Years in Jerusalem

Abijam began to reign over Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam king of Israel and reigned three years in Jerusalem (14:31b—15:2a).

C. Walking in All the Sins of His Father Rehoboam

Abijam walked in all the sins of his father Rehoboam, and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah like the heart of David his forefather (v. 3).

D. For David's Sake Jehovah Giving David a Lamp in Jerusalem

For David's sake Jehovah gave David a lamp in Jerusalem, raising up his son after him and establishing Jerusalem. Jehovah did this because David did what was upright in the sight of Jehovah, not turning aside from anything that Jehovah had commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (vv. 4-5).

E. Fighting with Jeroboam

Abijam fought with Jeroboam, slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David (vv. 7b-8a).

II. THE REIGN OF ASA OVER JUDAH

Verses 8b through 24a speak of the reign of Asa over Judah. Asa was a good king, perhaps the best among the eight good kings of Judah.

A. Reigning for Forty-one Years in Jerusalem

Asa began to reign over Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel and reigned for forty-one years in Jerusalem (vv. 8b-10a).

B. Doing What Was Upright in the Sight of Jehovah with a Perfect Heart All His Days

Asa did what was upright in the sight of Jehovah with a perfect heart all his days, as David his forefather had done. Asa put away the male cult prostitutes out of the land and removed all the idols that his forefathers had made. He also removed his grandmother Maacah from being queen mother. She had made an abominable image for Asherah, but Asa cut it down and burned it at the brook Kidron (vv. 11-14).

C. Bringing Sanctified Things into the House of Jehovah

Asa brought into the house of Jehovah the things his father had sanctified and also the things that he himself had sanctified to God (v. 15).

D. War Being Waged between Asa and Baasha King of Israel All Their Days

War was waged between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. Asa made an alliance with Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, in order to overcome Baasha (vv. 16-22).

E. Being Diseased in His Feet in His Old Age

Asa was diseased in his feet in his old age. He slept with

his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David (vv. 23-24a).

III. THE REIGN OF NADAB OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning over the Northern Kingdom of Israel for Two Years

Nadab continued after his father Jeroboam to reign over the northern kingdom of Israel for two years. His reign began from the second year of Asa king of Judah (14:20b; 15:25).

B. Doing Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Nadab did evil in the sight of Jehovah and walked in the way of his father and in his sin by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 26).

C. Baasha Conspiring against Him

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha conspired against Nadab, killed him and all the house of Jeroboam his father, and usurped the throne (vv. 27-31). The record of Nadab thus concludes with rebellion, conspiracy, murder, and usurpation of the throne.

IV. THE REIGN OF BAASHA OVER ISRAEL

In 15:32—16:7 we have an account of the reign of Baasha over Israel.

A. Reigning for Twenty-four Years

Baasha began to reign over Israel in the third year of Asa king of Judah and reigned for twenty-four years (15:33).

B. Doing Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Baasha also did evil in the sight of Jehovah and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 34).

C. The Prophet Jehu Coming to Rebuke Baasha

The prophet Jehu came to rebuke Baasha and told him that God would sweep up after Baasha and after his house,

making his house like the house of Jeroboam because of his walking in the way of Jeroboam, causing God's people to sin and provoking God to anger, and because he had killed all the house of Jeroboam (16:1-7).

V. THE REIGN OF ELAH OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Two Years

Elah was crowned to reign over Israel in the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah and reigned for two years (vv. 6b, 8).

B. Zimri Conspiring against Him

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri, the captain of half of Elah's chariots, conspired against Elah and struck him down. He then reigned in his place and destroyed all the house of Baasha (vv. 9-14).

VI. THE REIGN OF ZIMRI OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Seven Days in Tirzah

Zimri was crowned in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah and reigned for just seven days (v. 15).

B. The People Making Omri King over Israel

When the people heard that Zimri had struck down the king, they made Omri, the captain of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp (v. 16).

C. Omri with All the People of Israel Besieging Tirzah

Omri with all the people of Israel besieged Tirzah. Zimri went up to the citadel of the king's house and burned the house over him with fire and committed suicide because he did evil in the sight of Jehovah and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he caused Israel to sin (vv. 17-20).

VII. THE REIGN OF OMRI OVER ISRAEL

Verses 21 through 28a speak of the reign of Omri over Israel.

A. The People of Israel Being Divided into Two

The people of Israel were divided into two. Half went after Tibni, making him king, and half went after Omri (v. 21).

B. Beginning to Reign after the Death of Tibni

The people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni, and Omri began to reign after the death of Tibni (v. 22).

C. Reigning over Israel for Twelve Years

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri reigned over Israel for twelve years, reigning six years in Tirzah (v. 23).

D. Purchasing the Hill of Samaria

Omri purchased the hill of Samaria and built a city upon the hill and called the name of the city that he built Samaria (v. 24).

E. Doing Evil in the Sight of Jehovah More than All Who Were before Him

Omri did evil in the sight of Jehovah more than all who were before him and went in all the way of Jeroboam and in his sin by which he caused Israel to sin, provoking Jehovah to anger with their idols (vv. 25-27).

F. Being Buried in Samaria

Omri died and was buried in Samaria (v. 28a).

VIII. THE REIGN OF AHAB OVER ISRAEL

In 16:28b—22:40a we see the reign of Ahab over Israel.

A. Reigning over Israel for Twenty-two Years

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab began to reign over Israel, and he reigned in Samaria for twenty-two years (16:28b-29).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah More than All Who Were before Him

Ahab did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah more than all who were before him (vv. 30-33). He considered it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam (v. 31a). He took Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, as his wife. Then he went and served Baal and worshipped him, raising up an altar to Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria (vv. 31b-32). Furthermore, he made the Asherah and did more to provoke Jehovah to anger than all the kings of Israel preceding him (v. 33).

C. In His Days the Rebuilding of Jericho Bringing In the Curse to Them as Joshua Had Prophesied

In the days of Ahab, Jericho was rebuilt, and this brought in the curse to them as Joshua had prophesied (v. 34; Josh. 6:26).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TEN

THE REIGN OF AHAB OVER ISRAEL

(2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 17—19

D. God's Dealing with Ahab through Elijah the Prophet

As we continue to consider the reign of Ahab over Israel, we come now to the matter of God's dealing with Ahab through Elijah the prophet (17:1—19:9a). Because God was behind Elijah, He could deal with Ahab through Elijah. We may regard ourselves as smaller than Elijah, but we have something that he did not have. We have the Triune God wrought into us, constituting Himself into us every day, indwelling us, and building His home in us.

1. Shutting Up the Heavens from Rain

Chapter seventeen tells us that Elijah shut up the heavens from rain. Elijah's miracles, like Solomon's riches, glory, and splendor, were altogether in the physical realm.

a. God Sending Elijah to Hide Himself by the Brook Cherith

Because of the famine, God sent Elijah to hide himself by the brook Cherith to live on water from the brook and on the bread and meat brought in by ravens (vv. 2-7).

b. God Sending Elijah to Go to Zarephath of Zidon

After the brook dried up, God sent Elijah to go to Zarephath of Zidon, where God had commanded a widow to feed him (vv. 8-24; Luke 4:25-26). Instead of being fed by the widow, Elijah performed a miracle to provide meal and oil

for the widow and her family (1 Kings 17:8-16). After that, Elijah performed another miracle to raise up the widow's son from death (vv. 17-24; Heb. 11:35a). Both of these miracles were in the physical realm and did not involve anything spiritual.

2. Opening the Heavens to Rain

In 1 Kings 18 God through Elijah opened up the heavens to rain. Both the shutting up of heaven from rain and the opening of heaven to rain were great things.

a. God Sending Elijah to See Ahab concerning the Raining

God sent Elijah to see Ahab and to tell him that God would send rain upon the earth, and Elijah went to appear before Ahab (vv. 1-2). In coming to Ahab Elijah was very bold.

b. Ahab Coming to Meet Elijah through Obadiah

Ahab came to meet Elijah through Obadiah, a servant of Ahab who hid a hundred prophets and fed them when Jezebel, Ahab's wife, cut off the prophets of Jehovah (vv. 3-16). Ahab and Elijah were enemies, and Obadiah was the middle man between them.

c. Elijah Challenging Ahab to Have a Test on Mount Carmel and Prove Who Is the Real God

Elijah challenged Ahab to have a test on Mount Carmel and prove who is the real God—Baal of the heathens or Jehovah of Israel (vv. 17-40).

1) The Prophets of Baal Offering a Bullock to Baal and Begging Baal to Burn Their Offering

Ahab, unable to avoid this challenge, sent word and gathered all of Israel to him at Mount Carmel, as well as the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who ate at Jezebel's table. The prophets of Baal offered a bullock to Baal and begged Baal to burn their offering, crying

and even cutting themselves so that their blood gushed out. They did all this to no avail as Elijah mocked them (vv. 17-29).

2) Elijah Praying to God, and Jehovah Sending Fire to Consume the Offering

Elijah, by himself alone, repaired (recovered) the broken-down altar of Jehovah by building it unto the name of Jehovah with twelve stones (signifying Israel, God's elect). Then he dug a trench around the altar with a capacity deep and wide, cut the bullock in pieces and laid it on the wood, and poured four jars of water on the burnt offering and on the wood three times until the water went around the altar and filled the trench also with water. After this, Elijah prayed to God, and Jehovah sent fire to consume the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust and to lick up the water that was in the trench (vv. 30-38).

3) All the People Falling on Their Faces and Saying That Jehovah Is God

When all the people saw what happened, they fell on their faces and said, "Jehovah—He is God! Jehovah—He is God!" (v. 39).

4) Elijah Commanding the People to Seize the Prophets of Baal

Elijah commanded the people to seize the prophets of Baal, letting no one escape. Then he brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there (v. 40).

5) Elijah Winning the Case

By this, Elijah won the case, and Ahab and all the false prophets lost the battle.

d. Telling Ahab That Rain Was Coming

Elijah told Ahab that rain was coming, saying to him, "Go up; eat and drink, for there is the sound of an abundance of rain" (v. 41). After telling Ahab this, Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and prayed until a great downpour of rain came from the heavens (vv. 42-45; James 5:18).

e. The Hand of Jehovah Being upon Elijah

First Kings 18:46 tells us that the hand of Jehovah (referring to the Spirit of Jehovah) was upon Elijah and that he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

3. Elijah Being Threatened by Jezebel, the Wife of Ahab

In 19:1-9a we see that Elijah was threatened by Jezebel, the wife of Ahab (cf. Rev. 2:20). When Ahab told her all that Elijah had done and how he had slain all the prophets of Baal, she sent a message to Elijah, saying, "The gods do so to me and even more, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them!" (v. 2).

Elijah was afraid and escaped for his life (vv. 3-8), first to Beer-sheba and then to the wilderness, where he requested to die and said to Jehovah, "It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers" (v. 4). Through the refreshing and encouraging by the angel, Elijah went further, to Horeb the mount of God, and there he lodged in a cave (v. 9a).

In chapter eighteen Elijah had a great victory, but in chapter nineteen he was fearful and escaped for his life. How could such a strong prophet be so weak after such a victory? In answering this question, I would like to compare Elijah with Paul. Nothing could threaten Paul. On the contrary, Paul was bold and ready to be martyred (2 Tim. 4:6-7, 17-18). He took his martyrdom as an opportunity to magnify Christ (Phil. 1:20-21). The power of God was upon Elijah at times, but the Triune God Himself was continually wrought into Paul, constituting him to be God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead).

Peter is another example of one who became weak. Concerning eating with the Gentiles, Peter did not keep the truth of the gospel due to his fear of his countrymen (Gal. 2:11-14). Paul was bolder than Peter. Although Peter was under the Lord Jesus for three and a half years and received power from on high on the day of Pentecost, he did not have

the Triune God wrought into him to the degree that Paul did. Paul was thoroughly constituted with the Triune God.

We all have Christ in us, but to what degree do we enjoy Christ constituting Himself into us day by day? Every day, moment by moment, the embodiment of the Triune God, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, is making His home in our hearts, constituting Himself into our being. However, in a matter such as talking with our spouse, we may fail to practice to enjoy Christ constituting Himself into us.

The forty kings of Israel and Judah were in the highest position, but they were not careful in their enjoyment of the good land. Not even David enjoyed the good land in full. We should apply their example to ourselves. After hearing many messages on the enjoyment of Christ, have we become careful in enjoying Christ? The words "the enjoyment of Christ" may merely be a teaching or a slogan to us. There is too little reality among us of the enjoyment of Christ.

This shortage can be seen in our contact with one another. We try not to be wrong and we stay away from sinful things, but we are not careful in our enjoyment of Christ. I can testify that during the twenty years I worked together with Watchman Nee, we never joked with each other and we were always kept in oneness, without arguing even a little. We were kept in this way because we both saw the vision concerning God's economy and the Lord's recovery, and we both learned how to live and have our being in the spirit and according to the spirit for our experience of Christ.

We have pointed out that what we are, what we desire, what we intend to do, what we want, and how we behave ourselves have very much to do with our enjoyment of Christ. My burden in these messages is not merely to expound the Word but to learn the lessons from the history in typology. We must learn to be watchful and careful in taking care of the enjoyment of Christ. It is hard to find one Christian who is really living in the spirit and according to the spirit. May the Lord be merciful to us. We should not try to be today's Elijah. Rather, we should endeavor to be today's Paul. Paul could declare that he had been crucified with Christ and that he lived no longer but Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). He

could also say that he magnified Christ and lived Christ, even in prison, through the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19-21). Our life today should be like this.

E. Jehovah's Commission to Elijah in His Discouragement

In 1 Kings 19:9b-18 we have the record of Jehovah's commission to Elijah in his discouragement. When Elijah was thoroughly disappointed, God came in to give him a further commission so that he might learn something more.

Elijah's shutting up of the heavens, his opening of the heavens, and his calling fire down had nothing to do with God's economy. When the disciple John asked whether the Lord Jesus wanted them to command fire to come down and consume a village, He rebuked them, saying, "You do not know of what kind of spirit you are" (Luke 9:55). This indicates that the Lord Jesus did not come to be an Elijah. Rather, He came to accomplish God's economy by being put on the cross.

God's economy is altogether beyond the physical world. Today's Christianity, however, focuses on the physical world, and many like to see miracles and healings. The Lord Jesus did many healings and even raised people from the dead. But when He was arrested, He did not call fire down. He delivered Himself into His killers' hands. Even though they came to kill Him, He did not do anything to save Himself.

The situation was similar with Paul. At the beginning of his ministry, Paul did many miracles. However, later, when Timothy was sick, Paul only said to him, "Use a little wine for the sake of your stomach" (1 Tim. 5:23). When Paul was ready to be martyred, there was no miracle. Instead, there was only the Triune God to be Paul's enjoyment in the spirit as the bountiful supply, enabling him to endure persecution willingly and triumphantly. Paul was ready for persecution and martyrdom because he was full of God, saturated with God, and constituted with God. Caesar Nero killed him, but through his fourteen Epistles Paul gained the entire world.

Elijah had not learned these lessons. He ran away in fear because, unlike Paul, he did not have the Triune God wrought

into him. He entered into a cave to hide, thinking that he could do nothing and that it was better for him to die. God did not rebuke him, but instead He indicated that there was still a commission for Elijah to carry out.

1. The Word of Jehovah Coming to Elijah

The word of Jehovah came to Elijah, asking him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9b). Elijah answered, saying, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life" (v. 10).

2. God Charging Him to Go Out and Stand upon the Mountain before Jehovah to Hear His Word

God charged Elijah to go out and stand upon the mountain before Jehovah (v. 11a). Elijah waited for the word of commission, thinking that it must be in the big windstorm or in the earthquake or in the fire, but Jehovah was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire (vv. 11b-12a). When Elijah became fully disappointed, a gentle, quiet voice came (v. 12b). This is the New Testament principle. The fact that God spoke to Elijah in a gentle, quiet voice indicates that God was ushering Elijah into the New Testament age. Today God does not speak to us by thundering. God always speaks to us gently and quietly.

In this commission God charged Elijah to anoint three persons (vv. 15-16). First, God commissioned him to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. This indicates the New Testament principle of taking care of the Gentiles. Second, Elijah was to anoint Jehu as king over Israel. Third, Elijah was charged to anoint Elisha, who is a type of the gracious Christ, as his successor.

3. Telling Elijah That He Had Left Himself Seven Thousand in Israel Who Had Not Bowed Down Their Knees to Baal

Elijah had told God that the children of Israel had forsaken His covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His

prophets and that he alone was left (v. 14). God told Elijah that He had left Himself seven thousand faithful ones in Israel who had not bowed down their knees to Baal and had not kissed him with their mouth (v. 18). These faithful ones, the overcomers, were still standing on God's side. Eventually, God punished Israel by sending them away from their fathers' house as captives. It was the overcomers who brought them back. One of the overcomers, Daniel, prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Through his gracious prayer God brought Israel back to their fathers' land.

God does not accomplish His economy in the Old Testament way. All the realities concerning God's economy are in the way of God the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship (2 Cor. 13:14). When the church in Corinth defamed Paul (12:16-18), he did not curse them or accuse them; he prayed for them. After the church in Corinth repented a little, Paul wrote a second letter to them, telling them that the people of God should be transformed into His image (3:18) by enjoying Him as the source, the course, and the flow of the Triune God's love in grace through fellowship.

F. Elijah Finding Elisha and Gaining Him

Finally, according to 1 Kings 19:19-21, Elijah found Elisha and gained him to follow him and replace him.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

THE REIGN OF AHAB OVER ISRAEL

(3)

AND
THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT OVER JUDAH

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 20:1—22:50

In this message we will continue to consider the reign of Ahab over Israel and then consider the reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah.

G. Ahab's Dealing with Ben-hadad King of Syria

In chapter twenty we have an account of Ahab's dealing with Ben-hadad king of Syria.

1. Ben-hadad's Insulting Challenge to Ahab

Ben-hadad assembled all his army together and besieged Samaria and fought against it (v. 1). Then he issued an insulting challenge to Ahab (vv. 2-6).

2. Ahab Rejecting Ben-hadad

Ahab called for all the elders of the land, and through their encouragement he rejected Ben-hadad (vv. 7-12).

3. Ahab Waging a War against Ben-hadad and Winning It

A certain prophet approached Ahab and said, "Thus says Jehovah, Have you seen all this great multitude? I am now delivering it into your hand today, and you will know that I am Jehovah" (v. 13). Encouraged by God's promise through the prophet, Ahab waged a war against Ben-hadad and won it (vv. 14-21).

4. Ahab Being Warned That Ben-hadad Would Come Back to Attack Him the Next Year

Ahab was warned by a prophet that Ben-hadad king of Syria would come back to attack him the next year (v. 22).

5. Ben-hadad Reorganizing His Army and Changing His Strategy

Ben-hadad reorganized his army and changed his strategy to fight with Israel in the plain instead of on the mountains. Ben-hadad then came to attack Ahab, but he lost the battle and surrendered to Ahab to save his life. Ahab made a treaty with him and released him (vv. 23-34).

6. Ahab Being Rebuked because He Had Released a Man Whom God Had Devoted to Destruction

Ahab was rebuked by a prophet in disguise because he had released a man whom God had devoted to destruction. God had decided to destroyed Ben-hadad, but Ahab released him without inquiring of God. Because of that, Ahab's life would be for that man's life and Ahab's people for that man's people (vv. 35-42).

7. Ahab Going to His House Sullen and Vexed

After Ahab was rebuked by the prophet, he went to his house sullen and vexed (v. 43).

H. Ahab Taking Naboth's Vineyard by Force in Injustice

Chapter twenty-one shows us that Ahab took Naboth's vineyard by force in injustice.

1. Ahab's Coveting of Naboth's Inheritance

Naboth had a vineyard close to Ahab's residence. Coveting this vineyard, Ahab told Naboth to give it to him that he might have it for a vegetable garden. Naboth, not afraid of the king, refused to give the inheritance of his fathers to Ahab (vv. 1-4).

2. Jezebel's Evil Plot

In verses 5 through 16 we read of Jezebel's evil plot to get rib of Naboth through the elders and nobles and to take possession of his inheritance.

3. Jehovah Sending Elijah to Condemn Ahab

Jehovah sent Elijah to condemn Ahab, saying that because of the evil he did to Naboth, in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs would lick up Ahab's blood also (vv. 17-19). Elijah went on to tell Ahab that all his posterity would be cut off and that the dogs and birds would eat them because Ahab had sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of Jehovah through Jezebel's inciting (vv. 20-26).

4. Ahab Repenting and Humbling Himself before God

Ahab repented and humbled himself before God. Because of this, God said that He would not bring the evil upon him in his days but would bring the evil upon his house in his son's days (vv. 27-29). Here we see that to some extent God was merciful even to such a man as Ahab.

I. Ahab's Miserable Ending

First Kings 22:1-40 describes Ahab's miserable ending.

1. Ahab Wanting to Fight against the King of Syria

After three years of peace between Syria and Israel, Ahab wanted to fight against the king of Syria for Ramoth-gilead. Regarding this, the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, was in alliance with Ahab (vv. 1-4).

2. Jehoshaphat Proposing to Ask for the Word of Jehovah

Jehoshaphat proposed to Ahab that they ask for the word of Jehovah (v. 5). Ahab assembled about four hundred prophets and asked them if he should go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or refrain. These false prophets lied to him, saying that he should go ahead and that God would deliver the city into his hand. However, Micaiah, a real prophet of God, prophesied

that all Israel would be scattered upon the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd, and told Ahab that Jehovah had put a lying spirit into his prophets and had spoken evil concerning him. Then Micaiah was imprisoned by Ahab (vv. 6-28). Ahab refused to listen to the real prophet but listened instead to the false prophets.

3. Ahab and Jehoshaphat Going into Battle

Ahab and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went into battle. Ahab disguised himself so that others would not recognize him, but he was still defeated and killed in the battle (vv. 29-36). Ahab could hide from people, but he could not hide from God, who saw where he was and what he was doing. Nothing can be hidden from the eyes of God.

4. Buried in Samaria

Ahab was buried in Samaria. Someone washed Ahab's blood from his chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood, according to what God had spoken (vv. 37-40a).

The way God dealt with Ahab shows how righteous and how merciful He is. On the one hand, God is kind; on the other hand, He is severe. We need to fear Him and to be serious with Him. We also need to be ready to reap what we have sown.

IX. THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT OVER JUDAH

Verses 41 through 50 tell us about the reign of Jehoshaphat over Judah.

A. Reigning for Twenty-five Years

Jehoshaphat began to reign in Judah at the age of thirty-five and reigned for twenty-five years (vv. 41-42).

B. Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah

Jehoshaphat walked in all the ways of Asa his father and did what was right in the sight of Jehovah (v. 43).

C. Making Peace with the King of Israel

Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel (vv. 44, 47-49).

D. Putting Away the Male Cult Prostitutes from the Holy Land

The remainder of the male cult prostitutes, which were left in the days of his father Asa, Jehoshaphat put away from the holy land (v. 46).

E. Buried in the City of David

Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David (v. 50).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWELVE

THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH OVER ISRAEL AND THE RAPTURE OF ELIJAH

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 22:40b, 51-53; 2 Kings 1:1—2:18

In this message we will consider the reign of Ahaziah over Israel (1 Kings 22:40b, 51-53; 2 Kings 1:1-18) and the rapture of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-18).

I. THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Two Years

Ahaziah began to reign over Israel in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat and reigned for two years (1 Kings 22:51).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Ahaziah did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, walking in the way of his father and his mother and in the way of Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin. Ahaziah served and worshipped Baal and provoked Jehovah the God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done (vv. 52-53). He saw the tragic ending of his father Ahab, but he did not take it as a warning.

C. His Illness and Death

Second Kings 1 is an account of the illness and death of Ahaziah.

1. Sending Messengers to Inquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ekron

When Ahaziah became ill he sent messengers and told them to go and inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether he would recover from his sickness (v. 2).

2. Jehovah Sending Elijah to Stop the Messengers of Ahaziah

Jehovah sent Elijah to stop the messengers of Ahaziah and to charge them to tell Ahaziah that he would not come down from his bed but would surely die (vv. 3-8).

3. Ahaziah Twice Sending a Captain of Fifty with His Fifty Men to Elijah

Ahaziah twice sent a captain of fifty with his fifty men to Elijah, and each time Elijah commanded fire to come down from heaven and consume them (vv. 9-12; Luke 9:54).

4. Ahaziah Sending a Third Captain with His Fifty Men to Elijah

Ahaziah sent a third captain with his fifty men to Elijah, and the captain entreated Elijah to save their lives. The angel of Jehovah told Elijah not to be afraid of the captain but to go down with him to see Ahaziah. Elijah went and told Ahaziah that because he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, he would surely die (2 Kings 1:13-16).

5. Ahaziah Dying according to the Word of Jehovah

Ahaziah died according to the word of Jehovah. Because he had no son, his brother Jehoram (according to the Septuagint) began to reign in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah (vv. 17-18).

II. THE RAPTURE OF ELIJAH

In 2 Kings 2:1-18 we have an account of the rapture of Elijah.

A. Elijah Trying to Leave Elisha, and Elisha Not Letting Him Go, in Three Steps

At the time when Jehovah was to take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, Elijah tried to leave Elisha, and Elisha did not let him go, in three steps (vv. 1-8). The first step was from Gilgal to Bethel (vv. 1-3); the second step was from

Bethel to Jericho (vv. 4-5); and the third step was from Jericho to the river Jordan. Fifty sons (disciples) of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance. Elijah struck the water with his mantle, and the water parted so that he and Elisha crossed over on dry ground (vv. 6-8).

Elijah and Elisha are both types with much spiritual significance. Elijah is a type of the Old Testament age, and Elisha is a type of the New Testament age. The age was changed by passing through four places—Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the river Jordan.

Gilgal was a place where God's people dealt with their flesh (Josh. 5:2-9). The children of those who came out of Egypt had not been circumcised, indicating that their flesh had never been dealt with. When they crossed the Jordan to begin fighting to gain the good land, they first dealt with their flesh by being circumcised at Gilgal.

From Gilgal Elijah and Elisha went to Bethel. In Genesis 12, when Abraham came out of Chaldea (giving up the world) and came to Bethel, he built an altar to offer everything to God. This indicates that Bethel is the place to give up the world and turn to God absolutely, taking God as everything.

Elijah then led Elisha to Jericho. The first city that Joshua and the people of Israel had to defeat when they entered into the good land was Jericho. Jericho signifies the head of God's enemy, Satan.

Finally, Elijah and Elisha went to the river Jordan, which signifies death. The New Testament baptism, putting people into death, began from the Jordan (Matt. 3:5-6, 13). To cross the river Jordan, Elijah struck the water with his mantle. Elijah's mantle typifies the outpoured Spirit, the Spirit of power. The Spirit of power, which some Bible teachers call the "mantle Spirit," dealt with the river of death so that the way was opened for Elijah and Elisha to cross over.

As we consider the significance of all these types, we see that in order for the age to be changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we must deal with our flesh, give up the world and turn to God, defeat Satan, and pass through death.

B. Elisha Asking a Double Portion of Elijah's Spirit to Be upon Him

Elijah charged Elisha to ask him what he should do for him before he was taken from him, and Elisha asked, "Let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (2 Kings 2:9).

C. A Chariot of Fire and Horses of Fire Appearing to Separate Elijah from Elisha

A chariot of fire and horses appeared to separate Elijah from Elisha. Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and Elisha saw it and cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" (vv. 11-12a). Thus Elijah was taken up, leaving Elisha alone on the earth.

D. Elisha Gaining the Double Portion of the Spirit of Elijah

Elisha gained the double portion of the spirit of Elijah (vv. 12b-18). After Elijah was taken up, Elisha grasped his clothes and tore them in two pieces. Then he picked up Elijah's mantle, which had fallen from him, returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan, and struck the water, saying, "Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?" (vv. 12b-14). The water parted, and Elisha crossed over. When the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" (v. 15). Then fifty sons of the prophets attempted to seek Elijah for three days to no avail (vv. 16-18).

Elisha surely received the spirit of Elijah. However, as we will see, the Spirit, who at Elijah's time performed great miracles such as shutting up the heavens, opening up the heavens, and calling down fire from heaven, acted in a different way through Elisha. Elisha behaved in a way which was very similar to that of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels, doing many gracious and sweet things.

For three and a half years the Lord Jesus brought His disciples from the dealing with the flesh (Gilgal), to the giving up of the world (Bethel), to the defeating of Satan, the head of the demons (Jericho). Eventually, the Lord Jesus brought

His disciples to the river Jordan. The one hundred twenty who were praying in Acts 1 had all been brought to the Jordan to die with Christ and to be buried with Him. I believe that, as a result, they no longer treasured what they were or what they could do but had torn this "into two pieces." Through all these steps, they were in a position to receive the mantle of Elijah, the power from on high. Therefore, on the day of Pentecost the Spirit of power came upon them. Today we are those who are following the Lord Jesus from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to the Jordan. Through all these steps we enter into a new age, the age of the New Testament, where Christ is doing gracious things.

Elijah's rapture typified the termination of the Old Testament age in God's economy. But Elijah himself was not terminated. He was taken up into heaven to await the next age to see Elisha (Christ) doing many gracious and sweet things. We are now in the age of the New Testament of Christ, who did and is still doing everything graciously.

The Scriptures say that Elijah will come back again (Mal. 4:5; Luke 1:17; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; cf. 17:3-4; Rev. 11:3-12). At the end of the New Testament age, the great tribulation will be a time like Ahab's time, and Elijah will return as the same kind of witness. During the three and a half years of the great tribulation, God will be forced to use Elijah again to burn His enemies with fire (Rev. 11:5). Eventually, Elijah will be killed, and after three and a half days he will rise up and be raptured to join not just the Old Testament saints but also the New Testament overcomers.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

ELISHA'S MINISTRY OF GRACE

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 2:19-25; 4:1—6:7

In this message we will consider what is revealed in 2 Kings concerning Elisha's ministry of grace.

I. ELIJAH BEING A TYPE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST IN CONVICTING PEOPLE UNTO DEATH

Elijah was a type of John the Baptist in convicting people unto death (Luke 1:17; Matt. 11:11, 14; 3:1-2, 6-11a). John the Baptist, who came before Christ, ushered in Christ. This is typified by Elijah's ushering in Elisha.

II. ELISHA BEING A TYPE OF CHRIST IN DOING MIRACLES OF GRACE IN LIFE

Elisha was a type of Christ in doing miracles of grace in life. Elijah did some great miracles, such as closing up the heavens so that it might not rain and calling down fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering and the water that had been poured upon it. However, when Elisha came in to replace him, he did not perform wonders. Instead, Elisha did miracles of grace in life.

Many Christians pay attention to miracles, but they neglect the matters of grace and life or speak of them in a very shallow way. Paul emphasized grace very much in the book of Romans. In Romans justification by grace is unto the reigning in life (3:24; 5:17-18). Grace in life is, therefore, a crucial matter in Romans.

Grace is God doing everything for us by giving Himself to us as our enjoyment. This grace issues in the divine life, which is rich and high, even unto making us co-kings with Christ. However, among today's Christians it is not likely

that one will hear a message telling the believers that God's grace issues in the divine life for us to reign as kings.

A. Healing the Bad Water of Jericho

First, Elisha healed the bad water of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22). When the men of the city told Elisha that the water was bad and that the land was barren, he went out to the source of the water and threw salt there, saying, "Thus says Jehovah, I have healed this water; there will not be any more death or barrenness from there" (v. 21). Jericho signifies Satan, and with Satan everything is death, including the water. But the bad water of Jericho was healed according to the word of Elisha and became good water, water that gave life.

The first miracle the Lord Jesus performed in the Gospel of John was the changing of water into wine (2:3-11). The significance of this miracle is the changing of death into life. Changing death into life is the governing principle of all the Lord's miracles in the Gospel of John and of all the cases dealt with by Him in chapters three through eleven of John. The significance of the miracle performed by Elisha in 2 Kings 2 and of the miracle performed by the Lord Jesus in John 2 is the same—the changing of death into life.

B. Calling the Things Not Being as Being

Next, Elisha called the things not being as being (2 Kings 4:1-7, 8-17, 42-44; cf. Matt. 14:14-21; 15:32-39; Rom. 4:17b). In particular, Elisha called things not being as being when he produced many vessels of oil from one vessel. The Lord Jesus did the same thing in principle. In Matthew 14 and 15 He fed multitudes with a few loaves and fishes.

In this matter also Elisha was a type of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament age. More than any other prophet, Elisha did things that, in type, were the same as what the Lord Jesus did in reality. In principle, Elisha and the Lord Jesus did the same thing, performing miracles of grace in life.

C. Resurrecting the Dead from Death

Elisha also resurrected the dead from death (2 Kings 4:18-37; cf. Heb. 11:35; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:41-44; Rom. 4:17b). The Lord Jesus has resurrected millions of persons, including us (John 5:25).

Calling things not being as being and giving life to the dead are not merely miracles. They are grace resulting in life unto the reigning in life as kings.

D. Nullifying the Poison of the Wild Gourds with Flour

When the disciples of Elisha were short of food, they cooked a stew with poisonous gourds. Elisha nullified the poison of the wild gourds with flour (2 Kings 4:38-41). In principle, the Lord Jesus did the same thing for His disciples. He warned them, saying, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6-12), and He healed the disciples with Himself as the fine flour.

Many of the teachings in today's Christianity are "poisonous gourds." Some Christian books are good, but many are not pure. We have recommended certain writings by Andrew Murray, Madame Guyon, Brother Lawrence, and others. We have especially recommended Andrew Murray's masterpiece *The Spirit of Christ,* as well as *God's Plan of Redemption* by Mary E. McDonough and *Life on the Highest Plane* by Ruth Paxton. Among us we also have the ministry of Brother Nee. Brother Nee's ministry was rejected by the Western missionaries in his youth, but today his ministry is known by seeking Christians throughout the world. By the Lord's mercy and grace, in the last seventy years nearly all the crucial, important revelations of the Bible have been covered in Watchman Nee's ministry and my ministry. I would urge you to pay attention to these pure and healthy things and not waste your time collecting "poisonous gourds."

E. Healing Leprosy

In 2 Kings 5 Elisha healed a case of leprosy (Luke 4:27).

The Lord Jesus did the same thing in His ministry (Matt. 11:5; 8:1-4; Luke 17:11-19).

F. Floating with a Wooden Stick the Ax Head That Had Fallen into the Waters

In 2 Kings 6:1-7 Elisha floated with a wooden stick an ax head that had fallen into the waters. This signifies Christ recovering with His cross, in resurrection, the power of sinners that had fallen into the death water. As sinners, we lost our "ax head," our power, but Christ has recovered this lost power in resurrection with the "wooden stick" of His cross.

G. Cursing the Mocking Boys

In 2 Kings 2:23-24 Elisha cursed the mocking boys to be torn up by two female bears out of the woods. Those who think that the Lord Jesus did not do the same thing in principle need to read the Gospel of Matthew again. Matthew 3:12 says that the wheat will be gathered into the Lord's barn but that He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. To be sure, this burning of the chaff is a curse. Furthermore, in Matthew 12:31-32, 34 the Lord Jesus warned the Pharisees concerning an unforgivable sin, the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 23 He spoke eight woes to the scribes and Pharisees. This was His curse to them.

By all of the foregoing we can see that Elisha was a very accurate type of Christ. Elisha changed the age in type, and the Lord Jesus did the same thing in fulfillment. Today we are in the changed age, the age of the fulfillment of God's New Testament economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

THE REIGN OF JEHORAM OVER ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 1:17b; 3:1-27; 6:8—8:15

The Old Testament history is closely related to God's economy in the way of typology. The prophet Elisha represents God's New Testament economy in typology. Elisha was a type in the Old Testament who typified the real things in the New Testament. In Luke 4:27 the Lord Jesus referred to Elisha as a type of Himself, saying, "There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian." Here the Lord indicated that Israel's rejection of Elisha and Elisha's turn to the Gentiles was a type of Himself as the Son of Man. This offended those in the synagogue, and they cast Him out. This fulfilled the type of Elisha, who came to God's people with the word of grace but was rejected by them. Christ also was rejected and forced to turn to the Gentiles to preach the word of grace.

In this message we will see more concerning the ministry of Elisha as we consider the reign of Jehoram over Israel.

I. THE REIGN OF JEHORAM OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Twelve Years in Samaria

Jehoram, the son of Ahab, began to reign from the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and reigned for twelve years in Samaria (2 Kings 1:17b; 3:1).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Jehoram did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, but not like his father and his mother, for he put away the pillar of Baal, which his father had made. Yet he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to

sin, and did not turn away from them (vv. 2-3). This means that Jehoram followed the one who was the founder of division and idol worship in Israel.

C. Fighting against the King of Moab

Jehoram fought against the king of Moab, who was rebelling against him (vv. 4-27). Jehoram made an alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah and the king of Edom (vv. 7-10). At the suggestion of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram sought out Elisha in order to inquire of Jehovah by him. Through Elisha Jehovah told Jehoram to go ahead into battle (vv. 11-19). Jehoram conquered Moab, forcing the king of Moab to offer his firstborn son, his successor, to his idol as a burnt offering upon the wall (vv. 20-27a). Then great wrath came upon Israel, and they departed and returned to their own land (v. 27b).

D. Ben-hadad, the King of Syria, Waging War against Israel

In 6:8-23 we are told that Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, waged war against Israel.

1. Elisha Unveiling the Strategy of Ben-hadad to Jehoram and Instructing Him

Elisha unveiled the strategy of Ben-hadad to Jehoram king of Israel and instructed him how to stay away from Ben-hadad's strategy (vv. 8-11).

2. Ben-hadad Sending an Army to Besiege the City of Dothan

After he was informed that it was Elisha who had unveiled his strategy to Jehoram, Ben-hadad sent an army to besiege the city of Dothan (vv. 12-14).

3. Elisha's Young Attendant Seeing the Army and Fearing

Elisha's young attendant saw the army in the morning and was afraid, not knowing what to do (vv. 15-16).

4. Elisha Praying That Jehovah Would Open His Young Attendant's Eyes

Elisha prayed that Jehovah would open his young attendant's eyes. Jehovah opened his eyes, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (v. 17). These were just for defense, not for offense. Elijah's miracles were offensive, but Elisha's were defensive. The horses and chariots of fire around Elisha were not for fighting but only for protecting.

5. Elisha Praying That God Would Strike Ben-hadad's Army with Blindness

Ben-hadad's army came down to Elisha, and Elisha prayed that God would strike them with blindness. After Jehovah had stuck them with blindness according to Elisha's word, Elisha told them to follow him, and he brought them to Samaria. Then he asked God to open their eyes, and they saw that they were in the midst of Samaria (vv. 18-20).

6. Elisha Instructing Jehoram to Prepare a Feast for the Army of Ben-hadad

Jehoram wanted to kill the army of Ben-hadad, but Elisha stopped him and instructed him to prepare a feast for them and then let them return to their master. After they had eaten and drunk, they went to their master, and the bands of Syria no longer came to invade the land of Israel (vv. 21-23). In this matter of preparing a feast for the enemies we see the New Testament ministry (Rom. 12:20-21). The Syrians were stopped by being invited to a feast.

E. Ben-hadad King of Syria Besieging Samaria

Second Kings 6:24—7:20 tells us that Ben-hadad king of Syria besieged Samaria.

1. There Being a Great Famine in Samaria

There was a great famine in Samaria (6:25-29). The famine was severe to such an extent that the people would eat their children.

2. Jehoram King of Israel Being Angry with Elisha

Jehoram king of Israel was angry with Elisha and tried to kill him (vv. 30-33).

3. Elisha Prophesying concerning a Rich Provision of Food

In 7:1-20 Elisha prophesied that on the next day there would be a rich provision of food by God's defeating of the Syrians.

a. The Captain Who Upheld the King Not Believing That There Could Be Such a Rich Provision of Food

The captain who upheld the king did not believe that there could be such a rich provision of food, saying, "Even if Jehovah made windows in heaven, could this thing happen?" (v. 2a). Elisha told him that his eyes would indeed see it but that he would not eat from it.

b. Four Lepers Discovering the Rich Provision of Food and Reporting It to the King's Household

Four lepers discovered the rich provision of food and reported the good news to the king's household. The king's servants checked out the situation and confirmed the report of the lepers (vv. 3-15).

c. The People of Israel Going Forth to Plunder the Camp of the Syrians

The people of Israel went forth to plunder the camp of the Syrians. They trampled the unbelieving captain in the gate, and he died as Elisha had said (vv. 16-20).

F. Elisha Telling of a Seven-year Famine Ordered by God

Elisha told the woman whose son he had restored to life to go with her household and dwell wherever she could, because a seven-year famine ordered by God was to come. She did according to Elisha's word. After she returned, she

regained her inheritance through the king by the help of Elisha (8:1-6).

G. Elisha's Friendly Contact with Ben-hadad King of Syria

Verses 7 through 15 describe Elisha's friendly contact with Ben-hadad king of Syria.

1. Elisha Coming to Damascus when Ben-hadad Was Sick

Elisha came to Damascus when Ben-hadad was sick, and Ben-hadad was informed of this (v. 7).

2. Ben-hadad Sending His Servant Hazael to See Elisha with a Great Gift

Ben-hadad sent his servant Hazael to see Elisha with a great gift of forty camel loads of all the good things of Damascus, to ask Elisha whether Ben-hadad would recover from his sickness (vv. 8-9).

3. Elisha Answering That Ben-hadad Would Recover from His Sickness

Elisha answered that Ben-hadad would recover from his sickness but would certainly die. Then Elisha prophesied to Hazael that he would be king over Syria. Elisha felt ashamed and wept because Hazael would do evil to the children of Israel, setting their strongholds on fire, slaying their choice young men, dashing their little ones to pieces, and ripping open their pregnant women (vv. 10-13).

4. Hazael Coming Back to Tell His Master What Elisha Said to Him

Hazael came back to tell his master Ben-hadad what Elisha said to him. On the next day Hazael murdered Ben-hadad and usurped the throne (vv. 14-15).

II. IN HIS MINISTRY ELISHA BEHAVING HIMSELF AS GOD'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE EARTH

In his ministry Elisha the prophet, as the man of God,

behaved himself as God's representative, as the acting God, on the earth. As believers in Christ, we can be the same.

Elisha, as a disciple of Elijah, eventually gained Elijah's spirit, but he was absolutely different from Elijah. In typology Elijah typifies the Old Testament economy and Elisha typifies the New Testament economy.

When we read the historical books, we need to have a view that covers the entire Bible from the first page to the last. Paul was one who knew the Old Testament and was able to interpret it. The book of Romans is an explanation of the Old Testament verse that says, "The righteous shall have life and live by faith" (Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4). Paul wrote a book of sixteen chapters to define what it means to have life through faith. The first four chapters are judicial, telling us that God justifies us based on Christ's redemption through our faith (3:24, 28). This has nothing to do with life. However, God's justification by grace leads to life (5:18). Justification issues in regeneration, the receiving of the divine life, which is God Himself. This life is working within us to make us kings to reign (v. 17). After chapter four, every chapter of Romans is organic. By this organic life we, the justified sinners, are made living members of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ in chapter twelve is expressed organically in different localities in chapter sixteen.

I received most of this light through Brother Nee. He was the most balanced person in knowing the Bible. Through him I picked up the principle of studying the Bible in the way of life.

The Bible has been studied, interpreted, and expounded by thousands throughout the last twenty centuries. Brother Nee studied all the interpretations and passed them on to me. This is why the preface of the Recovery Version of the New Testament says that the footnotes contain "the 'crystallization' of the understanding of the divine revelation which the saints everywhere have attained to in the past two thousand years." If we pay attention to all the notes, we will understand the Bible through all the teachers in the past.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

THE REIGNS OF JEHORAM AND AHAZIAH OVER JUDAH AND THE REIGN OF JEHU OVER ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 8:16—10:36

We have strongly pointed out that the Old Testament history is very much related to God's economy in the way of typology. If we read the books of history in the Old Testament without knowing the typology, we will not understand these books. In 2 Kings two persons—Elisha and Jezebel—are striking types of certain real things in the New Testament. Whereas Elisha was a very sweet person, Jezebel was most evil. In this message on the reigns of Jehoram and Ahaziah over Judah and the reign of Jehu over Israel, we will see the destruction of Jezebel.

Both the Old Testament in typology and the New Testament in fulfillment speak of Jezebel. The evil of Jezebel, a most hateful person, is like the evil of Satan. Many people have been poisoned, cheated, veiled, and usurped by her.

The Jezebel of the Old Testament was a type and a shadow. It is important for us to see who Jezebel is in the New Testament reality. Jezebel, the pagan wife of Ahab, is a type of the apostate church. Christianity is the biggest religion on earth, and the greatest part of this religion is today's Jezebel, the apostate Roman Catholic Church. In Revelation 2:24 the Lord Jesus said that Jezebel teaches the "deep things of Satan." In Matthew 13:33 this same woman mixed leaven, the element of Satan, with fine flour, which signifies the Lord Jesus as the meal offering for the satisfaction of God and man. Jezebel, the apostate church, teaches the deity of Christ but has mixed much leaven with the teaching of the divine person of Christ. With Jezebel, therefore, there is one

part truth and many parts leaven. Vast regions of the earth are under her influence. In Revelation 17 this woman is the great harlot who mixes abominations with the divine things.

Let us now turn to 2 Kings 8:16—10:36 to see what is recorded here concerning Jehoram, Ahaziah, Jehu, and Jezebel.

I. THE REIGN OF JEHORAM OVER JUDAH

The reign of Jehoram over Judah is described in 8:16-24a.

A. Reigning for Eight Years in Jerusalem

At the age of thirty-two, Jehoram began to reign in the fifth year of Jehoram (Joram) the son of Ahab, king of Israel, while his father Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem (vv. 16-17).

B. Marrying Ahab's Daughter

Jehoram married Ahab's daughter and walked in the way of the kings of Israel and as the house of Ahab had done. Although he was king over Judah, he walked in the way of the kings of Israel because he was related to and was influenced by the house of Ahab. Like almost all the kings, he did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah (v. 18).

C. Jehovah Not Willing to Destroy Judah

Verse 19 says, "But Jehovah would not destroy Judah, because of David His servant, as He had promised him that for his sake He would provide a lamp for his children always." This indicates that Jehoram was worthy to be destroyed by God. However, Jehovah was not willing to destroy Judah because He had promised David to provide a lamp for his children.

D. Edom's Revolt from under the Hand of Judah

Formerly, the Edomites did not have a king, but they installed a king over themselves and revolted from under the hand of Judah (v. 20). Jehoram, with all his chariots, fought against Edom, but his people fled to their tents (vv. 21-22a).

E. Libnah Revolting at the Same Time

Libnah revolted at the same time (v. 22b).

F. Jehoram Dying

Jehoram died and was buried with his fathers in the city of David (vv. 23-24a).

II. THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH OVER JUDAH

In 8:24b-29; 9:14b-16, 21-29 we have an account of the reign of Ahaziah over Judah.

A. Reigning for One Year

At the age of twenty-two, Ahaziah son of Jehoram began to reign over Judah in the twelfth year of Joram son of Ahab, king of Israel. Ahaziah reigned for one year in Jerusalem (8:24b-26; 9:29).

B. Walking in the Way of the House of Ahab

Ahaziah walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, like the house of Ahab, for he was a son-in-law to the house of Ahab (8:27).

C. Joining Joram to Fight with Hazael King of Syria

Ahaziah joined Joram the son of Ahab and king of Israel to fight with Hazael king of Syria. Joram was wounded by the Syrians, and Ahaziah went to see him in his sickness (vv. 28-29; 9:14b-16).

D. Joining Jehoram (Joram) to Meet Jehu in His Rebellion

Ahaziah joined Jehoram (Joram) to meet Jehu in his rebellion. Ahaziah was fatally wounded by Jehu and was buried in the city of David (vv. 21-28).

III. THE REIGN OF JEHU OVER ISRAEL

Second Kings 9:1—10:36 speaks of the reign of Jehu over

Israel. Jehu was used by God as an executioner to carry out His judgment on the whole house of Ahab.

A. Being Anointed by a Son of the Prophets

Elisha the prophet told one of the sons of the prophets to take a flask of oil, pour it on Jehu's head, and say that Jehovah had anointed him king over Israel. The young man did as Elisha had said, anointing Jehu and declaring that God had made him king over the people of Jehovah, over Israel. Then the son of the prophets told Jehu that he had been charged by God to strike the house of Ahab his master for God's avenging of the blood of His servants the prophets and the blood of all His servants at the hand of Jezebel. He went on to say that the whole house of Ahab would perish and that every male of his descendants would be cut off, making the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, and that Jezebel would be eaten by the dogs with no one to bury her (9:1-10).

B. Being Recognized and Proclaimed to Be the King

Jehu was recognized and proclaimed to be the king by the servants of his master Jehoram king of Israel (vv. 11-13).

C. Rebelling against His Master Jehoram King of Israel

Jehu rebelled against Jehoram king of Israel, killed him, and threw him in the lot of the field of Naboth in fulfillment of God's prophecy concerning His avenging of the blood of Naboth and his sons. Naboth and his sons, innocent citizens, had been killed by Jezebel. Their blood was before God continually, and God sought to avenge that blood. Jehu also fatally wounded Ahaziah king of Judah (vv. 14-27). By this we can see that for the people of God to enjoy the good land, there must be a right and righteous situation.

D. Executing God's Judgment on Jezebel

Jehu executed God's judgment on Jezebel (vv. 30-37) by

having her thrown down from the window by the eunuchs. The fact that the eunuchs responded so quickly to Jehu's charge to throw Jezebel down indicates that they had hated this evil woman for quite a long time but could do nothing to her. Some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, and Jehu trampled her. When they went to bury her, they found only her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. This was in fulfillment of God's prophecy concerning her that in the lot of Jezreel the dogs would eat her flesh and that her corpse would be like dung upon the face of the field in the lot of Jezreel, so that people would not say, "This is Jezebel" (v. 37).

Revelation 17 shows the pitiful ending of the real Jezebel, the great harlot, the apostate Roman Catholic Church. When Antichrist and his ten kings persecute the religions of the earth, they will eat the flesh of Jezebel and burn her utterly with fire (v. 16).

E. Slaughtering the Seventy Sons of Ahab

Jehu also slaughtered the seventy sons of Ahab (2 Kings 10:1-11). Jehu proposed to the rulers of Jezreel, the elders, and the guardians of the children of Ahab to make one of the children of Ahab to be the successor to the throne and to fight for the house of Ahab (vv. 1-3). The one who was over the household, the one who was over the city, the elders, and the guardians of Ahab's children rebelled. They killed all the seventy sons of Ahab and sent their heads to Jehu, and Jehu killed Ahab's great men, acquaintances, and priests until no one remained (vv. 4-11).

F. Killing the Brothers of Ahaziah King of Judah

Verses 12 through 14 tell us that Jehu killed the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah.

G. Slaying All Who Were Left to Ahab in Samaria

Next, according to the word of Jehovah spoken to Elijah, Jehu slew all who were left to Ahab in Samaria (vv. 15-17).

H. Slaughtering All the Prophets of Baal

In subtlety, Jehu slaughtered all the prophets of Baal and all his servants, priests, and worshippers. Then he burned all the pillars of the house of Baal and broke down the house of Baal and made it a latrine, thus eradicating Baal from Israel (vv. 18-28).

I. Not Turning Away from the Sins of Jeroboam

Although Jehu did some things that were right and pleasing to God, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin, that is, the golden calves which were in Bethel and Dan (vv. 29, 31).

J. Jehovah Speaking to Jehu concerning His Sons

In verse 30 Jehovah spoke to Jehu, saying, "Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes and have dealt with the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." This also indicates that to enjoy the good land we must be right. How much we enjoy Christ as our good land depends on what we are and how right we are.

K. Jehovah Beginning to Cut Away Portions of Land in Israel

In those days Jehovah began to cut away portions of land in Israel by Hazael striking them in all the borders of Israel (vv. 32-33).

L. Being Buried in Samaria

After reigning over Israel for twenty-eight years in Samaria, Jehu slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz reigned in his place (vv. 34-36).

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

THE REIGNS OF ATHALIAH AND JOASH OVER JUDAH

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 11—12

Second Kings 11 and 12 are a record of the reigns of Athaliah and Joash over Judah.

I. THE REIGN OF ATHALIAH OVER JUDAH

A. Athaliah Destroying All the Royal Seed

Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah and the wife of Joram from the house of Ahab (8:25-27), destroyed all the royal seed (11:1).

B. The Daughter of King Joram Hiding Joash in the House of Jehovah

Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram and sister of Ahaziah, hid Joash the son of Ahaziah in the house of Jehovah for six years while Athaliah, the grandmother, reigned over the land (vv. 2-3).

C. The High Priest Devising to Anoint Joash

In the seventh year Jehoiada the high priest devised wisely to anoint Joash, and the people recognized him as the king with joy, clapping their hands and saying, "Long live the king!" (vv. 4-12).

D. Athaliah Reacting to the Enthronement of Joash and Being Killed

Athaliah reacted to the enthronement of Joash by tearing her clothes and crying out, "Treason! Treason!" (vv. 13-14). Then according to the instruction of Jehoiada the high priest she was killed outside the house of God (vv. 15-16).

II. THE REIGN OF JOASH (JEHOASH) OVER JUDAH

In 11:17—12:21 we have an account of the reign of Joash (Jehoash) over Judah.

A. Jehoiada the High Priest Making a Covenant between Jehovah and the King and the People

Jehoiada the high priest made a covenant between Jehovah and the king and the people that they would be Jehovah's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. Then all the people went to the house of Baal, broke it into pieces, shattered Baal's altars and images to pieces, and slew the priest of Baal (11:17-18).

B. Joash Being Enthroned at the Age of Seven

At the age of seven, Joash was enthroned by the people with rejoicing (vv. 19-21). Since Joash was still a boy, he was greatly helped by the high priest.

C. Reigning for Forty Years in Jerusalem

Joash began to reign over Judah from the seventh year of Jehu and reigned for forty years in Jerusalem (12:1).

D. Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah

Joash did what was right in the sight of Jehovah all the days in which Jehoiada the high priest instructed him. However, the high places were not removed, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places (vv. 2-3).

E. Repairing the House of God

Joash repaired the house of God with the offerings by the people under the management of the priests and the servants of the king, those who were faithful. But the money from the trespass offerings and the money from the sin offerings were for the priests (vv. 4-16).

F. Hazael King of Syria Coming Up to Seize Jerusalem

Hazael king of Syria came up to seize Jerusalem. Joash king of Judah sent him all the things which had been sanctified by his fathers and by himself with all the gold in the treasuries of the house of Jehovah and the house of the king, and Hazael departed from Jerusalem (vv. 17-18).

G. Being Murdered by His Servants

Although Joash was a good king, he was murdered by his servants. He was buried with his fathers in the city of David and was succeeded by his son Amaziah (vv. 19-21).

In reading the history of the kings and considering what is portrayed by the types, the main thing we can see is division. Division comes out of people's ambition, that is, the desire to be higher than others, to be the head, the ruler, and the king of the people.

In the New Testament the oneness of the Body of Christ is stressed very much. According to the Gospels, the followers of the Lord Jesus loved Him to the uttermost, giving up their country, home, and relatives to follow Him for three and a half years. During that time the most pressing issue among them was the matter of who would be greatest. Even during the final trip to Jerusalem, when the Lord Jesus was burdened to tell them once again about His crucifixion, they quarreled over who would be the greatest (Matt. 20:20-28; cf. Luke 22:24). The mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John, came to Him with her sons and asked that they would sit, one on His right and one on His left, in His kingdom (Matt. 20:20-21).

In His last night on earth, the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples at length of the depths of the divine revelation concerning God's economy (John 14—16). Following this, He offered a concluding prayer to the Father in John 17. In this prayer He repeatedly asked the Father to keep all the believers in the oneness of the Triune God. The Lord Jesus prayed for them based upon the life of the Triune God, the name of the Father, the truths concerning God's economy,

and the glory (vv. 11, 17, 21-23). From that time the disciples became faithful followers of the Lord. After His resurrection and ascension, they even stayed together in Jerusalem and prayed for ten days in one accord (Acts 1:14). When the Lord was poured out upon them as the Spirit at Pentecost, the church life began. However, division gradually came in.

I would ask you to consider, according to the New Testament, what was the first division to invade the church. I believe that the first division came in when Barnabas left Paul. After Saul—later Paul—was saved directly by the Lord and baptized by Ananias, Barnabas brought him into the fellowship of the Body. The believers in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul because he had been a persecutor and a devastator of the church, but Barnabas was bold to bring him to Jerusalem and recommend him to the apostles to be brought into the fellowship of the Body (Acts 9:26-28). Later, Paul and Barnabas, intimately related, were among the prophets and teachers in Antioch (13:1) and were eventually sent out by the Holy Spirit for the work to which He had called them (v. 2). When they first went out together, Barnabas's name was mentioned first (v. 7). But at Paphos a situation arose which required a stronger speaker, and Paul took the lead to speak (vv. 8-12). This indicated that, although previously Barnabas had been taking the lead, he was not as adequate as Paul, who now took the lead to speak. From that time Paul's name always came before Barnabas's in the divine revelation. For a time Paul and Barnabas worked together quite well. Later, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they visit the churches that had been raised up. Barnabas first proposed and then insisted on bringing his cousin Mark. Paul did not feel good about this because Mark, unable to bear the hardships of the journey, had retreated on their first trip. Because of this disagreement, Barnabas left Paul (15:36-39). After that, there is no mention of these two being together again. That was a division.

In serving the Lord in the Body of Christ, our heart must be single and pure. There was something not so single and pure, perhaps something of ambition, in the heart of Barnabas. This issued in division.

Division became a problem to the apostles, who endeavored to keep the oneness of the Body of Christ. A division rose up in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10-12), and Paul wrote to the church there concerning it. When Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, he said that the first virtue of the believers' conduct is to keep the oneness of the Spirit, that is, to keep the oneness of the Body (Eph. 4:1-3).

Throughout the centuries of church history, there has been division after division. During the past seventy years there have also been some divisions among us. According to my observation, every division is due to ambition. As a warning, I must tell you that in the past seventy years of the Lord's recovery no one who has created a division has ever repented. This is a very serious matter.

We should read the Old Testament history books not merely according to the letters in black and white but with a full view of God's economy on earth. If we have such a view, we will realize that the types in the books of history in the Old Testament show us that division brings in confusions, murders, and usurpations. Today, the entire Christian world is full of division, confusion, usurpation, and spiritual murder. Even among us there may be usurpation in relation to the eldership. Such an evil thing from Hades still remains in the Lord's recovery. You must be careful not to cause any divisions, for divisions are always damaging. If you cause a division, the first one damaged by the division will be yourself.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

THE REIGNS OF JEHOAHAZ, JEHOASH, AND JEROBOAM OVER ISRAEL AND OF AMAZIAH OVER JUDAH

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13—14

In this message we will consider the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam over Israel and the reign of Amaziah over Judah.

I. THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Seventeen Years

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, began to reign in the twenty-third year of Jehoash (Joash) and reigned for seventeen years (13:1).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Jehoahaz did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah and followed after the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat by which he caused Israel to sin. Jehoahaz did not turn away from them (v. 2).

C. The Anger of Jehovah Being Kindled against Israel

The anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Syria and into the hand of his son Ben-hadad. They destroyed Israel and made them like the dust at the threshing, leaving to Jehoahaz not more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers (vv. 3, 7, 22-24).

D. Jehoahaz Entreating Jehovah, and Jehovah Giving Israel a Deliverer

Jehoahaz entreated Jehovah, and Jehovah gave Israel a deliverer. However, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam but walked in them and kept Asherah in Samaria (vv. 4-6).

E. Buried in Samaria

Jehoahaz slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria (vv. 8-9a).

II. THE REIGN OF JEHOASH (JOASH) OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning in Samaria for Sixteen Years

Jehoash began to reign in the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah and reigned in Samaria for sixteen years (vv. 9b-10).

B. Doing Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Jehoash did evil in the sight of Jehovah and did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin but walked in them (v. 11).

C. The Glorious Ending of Elisha's Life and Ministry

Verses 14 through 21 tell us of the glorious ending of Elisha's life and ministry. Elisha was a wonderful type of Christ.

1. Not Being Healed by a Miracle

Elisha performed miracles of divine healing for others, but, in the will of God, he himself was not healed by a miracle (v. 14a).

2. Recognized by Joash King of Israel as the Chariots and Horsemen of Israel

Elisha was recognized by Joash king of Israel as the chariots and horsemen of Israel (v. 14b). This means that he was recognized as the national defense of Israel.

3. Prophesying to Joash by the Parable of the Shooting and Striking of Arrows

Elisha prophesied to Joash by the parable of the shooting and striking of arrows that Joash would defeat the Syrians and consume them three times (vv. 15-19).

4. Deceasing in the Body yet Still Ministering in the Spirit

Elisha deceased in his body yet still ministered in the spirit to enliven one of the dead (vv. 20-21). When he died his body was buried in a tomb. One day a man was killed, and his body was cast into the tomb of Elisha. When the body touched Elisha's body, the man was enlivened. Even the dead Elisha could enliven people. This is a picture of Christ in resurrection. Whoever touches Him is enlivened. D. L. Moody once said that the greatest miracle is regeneration. Regeneration involves a spiritually dead people touching the dead and resurrected Christ. Whoever touches this Christ is regenerated, enlivened. I can testify that sixty-nine years ago I touched Him and was enlivened and became an altogether different person. Ever since, Christ's enlivening life has kept me in His hand.

D. Recovering Cities out of the Hand of Ben-hadad

By his threefold victory over the Syrians, Jehoash recovered the cities out of the hand of Ben-hadad which Ben-hadad had taken in war out of the hand of Jehoahaz (v. 25).

E. Buried in Samaria with the Kings of Israel

Jehoash slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. He was succeeded by his son Jeroboam (vv. 12-13; 14:15-16).

III. THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH OVER JUDAH

A. Reigning for Twenty-nine Years in Jerusalem

Amaziah, the son of Joash king of Judah, began to reign in the second year of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz king of

Israel, at the age of twenty-five and reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem (14:1-2).

B. Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah

Amaziah did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that Joash his father had done, yet not like David his father. The high places were not removed, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places (vv. 3-4).

C. Slaying His Servants Who Had Slain the King His Father

When the kingdom was established in Amaziah's hand, he slew his servants who had slain the king his father (v. 5). However, according to God's commandment in the book of the law, he did not put to death the sons of the murderers (v. 6).

D. Smiting Ten Thousand of Edom

Amaziah smote ten thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela (v. 7).

E. Fighting against Jehoash King of Israel

Amaziah fought against Jehoash king of Israel. He was defeated before Israel and was captured by Jehoash. Jehoash came to Jerusalem, tore down its wall, and took all the gold and silver, all the vessels of the house of Jehovah and of the treasuries of the king's house, and took hostages to Samaria (vv. 8-14).

F. Living for Fifteen Years after the Death of Jehoash King of Israel

Amaziah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash king of Israel (vv. 17-18).

G. People in Jerusalem Conspiring against Him

People in Jerusalem conspired against Amaziah, and he fled to Lachish. They sent men after him to kill him there (v. 19).

H. Buried in Jerusalem

Amaziah was brought on horses and was buried in Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David. All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah (vv. 20-21).

IV. THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Forty-one Years in Samaria

Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in the fifteenth year of Amaziah king of Judah and reigned for forty-one years in Samaria (v. 23).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Jeroboam did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah and did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 24).

C. Restoring the Border of Israel from the Entrance of Hamath to the Sea of Arabah

Jeroboam restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah spoken through the prophet Jonah. Jehovah had seen the affliction of Israel, that it was bitter, for there was neither bond nor free left, nor was there anyone to help Israel. Jehovah did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam (vv. 25-27).

D. Sleeping with His Fathers

Jeroboam slept with his fathers, the kings of Israel, and his son Zechariah succeeded him (vv. 28-29).

At this juncture I would like to say a word concerning the relationship between the Old Testament history and the fulfillment of God's economy in the New Testament. The history in the Old Testament is a type. The fulfillment of the type is in the New Testament.

Regarding this we need to see that the prophetic books go together with the history of Israel. For example, Isaiah

helped Hezekiah. In Isaiah two verses are very striking. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Immanuel means "God with us." This is the Triune God becoming a child. As Isaiah strengthened and helped the kings of Israel, he prophesied that the very God of Israel would become a human child born of a virgin.

Isaiah 9:6 says, "Unto us a child is born…and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father." This is God becoming man for the purpose of accomplishing His economy by making man God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead). His becoming a man was for the purpose of making man God in life and in nature through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, an all-inclusive death, and resurrection. In resurrection He, as the last Adam in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This life-giving Spirit is the very God who became a man, lived on earth in humanity for thirty-three and a half years, died on the cross, and entered into resurrection, in which He became the life-giving Spirit.

This One is very wonderful. First, He was God becoming a human child. As a result, He was no longer just God but a God-man in the flesh. Paul calls Him the last Adam, meaning that He is the conclusion of mankind. As the last Adam in the flesh, He became a life-giving Spirit in resurrection. This all-inclusive Jesus Christ is the life-giving Spirit who regenerated us, who is God within us, and who is not only dwelling in us and living in us but also building Himself into our being to form a house for Himself within us. As believers in Christ, we should now live, move, and have our being in this Spirit and according to this Spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:25; Col. 2:6).

Through all the steps in the process of transformation (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18) God is making us Himself in life and in nature. Even the Lord Jesus Himself passed through a transformation. His humanity was transformed into divinity through the steps of death and resurrection. Our transformation involves the same steps. The Lord Jesus went through death and resurrection in less than three days, but our

transformation lasts our entire life. Whether we are transformed in this age or in the next, we will be transformed.

God is making us, His redeemed people, to be Him in life and in nature. He is making us His enlargement and His expression by transformation with the element of Himself as life. This means that the Triune God transforms us with His life, the divine life, as the element. Today this divine life is altogether the life-giving Spirit.

To be proper believers in Christ, we do not need to take care of many things. Rather, we need only to take care of living, walking, and having our being in the Spirit and according to the Spirit. The all-inclusive Spirit—containing all that Christ is, all that Christ has accomplished, and all that Christ has obtained and attained—is mingled with our regenerated spirit. We simply need to live, walk, and do things according to this mingled spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

THE REIGNS OF AZARIAH, JOTHAM, AND AHAZ OVER JUDAH AND OF ZECHARIAH, SHALLUM, MENAHEM, PEKAHIAH, AND PEKAH OVER ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 15—16

Second Kings 15 and 16 cover the reigns of Azariah, Jotham, and Ahaz over Judah and the reigns of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah over Israel.

I. THE REIGN OF AZARIAH (UZZIAH) OVER JUDAH

A. Reigning for Fifty-two Years in Jerusalem

At the age of sixteen, Azariah (Uzziah) began to reign over Judah in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel and reigned for fifty-two years in Jerusalem (15:1-2; 14:21).

B. Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah

Azariah did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. But Azariah did not remove the high places, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places (15:3-4).

C. Stricken by Jehovah so That He Became a Leper

Due to his trespass in touching the priestly service, Azariah was stricken by Jehovah so that he became a leper until the day of his death (v. 5a; 2 Chron. 26:16-21). He did not keep God's ordinance that only the priests ordained by God could participate in the priestly service. Azariah overstepped and touched the priestly service. This was a great offense to God, and it led to Azariah's becoming a leper.

D. His Son Jotham Being over the Household

Azariah's son, having become the acting king, was over the household and judged the people of the land (2 Kings 15:5b).

E. Building Up Elath and Restoring It to Judah

After the death of his father Amaziah, Azariah built up Elath and restored it to Judah (14:22).

F. Buried with His Fathers

Azariah slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. He was succeeded by his son Jotham (15:6-7).

II. THE REIGN OF ZECHARIAH OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Six Months

Zechariah began to reign in Samaria in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah and reigned for six months (v. 8).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Zechariah did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah as his fathers had done. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 9).

C. Shallum Conspiring against Him

Shallum conspired against Zechariah, struck him down before the people, and reigned in his place. This was in fulfillment of God's word spoken to his forefather Jehu that, because of his faithfulness to God, his sons would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation (vv. 10-12).

III. THE REIGN OF SHALLUM OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for One Month in Samaria

Shallum reigned for one month in Samaria, in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah (Azariah) king of Judah (v. 13).

B. Murdered by Menahem

Menahem came up from Tirzah, murdered Shallum, and usurped his throne (vv. 14-15).

IV. THE REIGN OF MENAHEM OVER ISRAEL

A. Capturing Tiphsah and Its Borders

Because those in Tiphsah did not open to him, Menahem captured Tiphsah and its borders, slaughtered all the people, and ripped open the pregnant women (v. 16). It is hard to explain why, having the law of God, he could be so evil and unrestrained.

B. Reigning for Ten Years in Samaria

Menahem began to reign over Israel from the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah and reigned for ten years in Samaria (v. 17).

C. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah throughout All His Days

Menahem did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Throughout all his days he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 18).

D. Pul King of Assyria Coming against the Land

Pul king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave him quite an amount of money exacted from Israel, from all the great men of wealth. Then the king of Assyria returned and departed from the land (vv. 19-20).

E. Sleeping with His Fathers

Menahem slept with his fathers and was succeeded by Pekahiah his son (vv. 21-22).

V. THE REIGN OF PEKAHIAH OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Two Years

Pekahiah began to reign over Israel in Samaria from the

fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah and reigned for two years (v. 23).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Pekahiah did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 24).

C. Murdered by Pekah

Pekahiah was murdered in his palace in Samaria by Pekah, his captain, who usurped his throne (vv. 25-26).

VI. THE REIGN OF PEKAH OVER ISRAEL

A. Reigning for Twenty Years

Pekah began to reign over Israel in Samaria from the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah and reigned for twenty years (v. 27).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Pekah did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin (v. 28).

C. Tiglath-pileser King of Assyria Invading Israel

During the days of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria invaded Israel and carried some of the people away captive to Assyria (v. 29).

D. Hoshea Conspiring against Him

In the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah and king of Judah, Hoshea conspired against Pekah, killed him, and reigned in his place (vv. 30-31).

VII. THE REIGN OF JOTHAM OVER JUDAH

A. Reigning for Sixteen Years

At the age of twenty-five, Jotham began to reign in Jerusalem in the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, and reigned for sixteen years (vv. 32-33).

B. Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah

Jotham did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father Uzziah had done. But the high places were not removed, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places (vv. 34-35a).

C. Building the Upper Gate of the House of Jehovah

Jotham built the upper gate of the house of Jehovah (v. 35b).

D. Jehovah Beginning to Send Rezin King of Syria and Pekah against Judah

In those days Jehovah began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah (v. 37).

E. Buried with His Fathers in the City of David

Jotham slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. He was succeeded by his son Ahaz (vv. 36, 38).

VIII. THE REIGN OF AHAZ OVER JUDAH

A. Reigning for Sixteen Years

At the age of twenty, Ahaz began to reign in Jerusalem in the seventeenth year of Pekah king of Israel and reigned for sixteen years (16:1-2a).

B. Not Doing What Was Right in the Sight of Jehovah His God

Ahaz did not do what was right in the sight of Jehovah his God, as David his father had. Rather, he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He caused his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations that Jehovah had dispossessed before the children of Israel. Also, he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree (vv. 2b-4).

C. Rezin King of Syria and Pekah King of Israel Coming to Attack Jerusalem

Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel came to attack Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz but were not able to conquer him (v. 5).

D. Rezin King of Syria Restoring Elath to Syria

Rezin king of Syria restored Elath to Syria and drove the Jews from there. The Syrians then came to Elath and dwelt there (v. 6).

E. Ahaz Seeking the Help of the King of Assyria

Ahaz sought the help of the king of Assyria by humbling himself as his servant and his son and at the cost of giving to the king of Assyria a present of the silver and the gold of the house of Jehovah and of the treasuries of the king's house. The king of Assyria attacked Damascus, took it, carried the people of it away captive, and killed Rezin (vv. 7-9).

F. Ahaz Going to Meet the King of Assyria at Damascus and Adopting the Pattern of the Altar There

Ahaz went to meet the king of Assyria at Damascus and saw the altar that was there. He adopted the pattern of this altar and through Urijah the priest he built an altar according to it in Jerusalem. Then Ahaz offered sacrifices upon it and charged Urijah the priest to burn all his offerings and the people's offerings upon that great altar. Ahaz then removed the bronze altar from the front of the house of God and put it by the side of his altar. The bronze altar would now be for Ahaz to inquire by. Next, Ahaz changed the way of putting the laver and bronze sea made by Solomon. Then because of the king of Assyria, he removed the way to enter the house of God on the Sabbath and the king's entry to enter the house of God (vv. 10-18).

G. Buried with His Fathers

Ahaz slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers

in the city of David. He was succeeded by Hezekiah his son (vv. 19-20).

From the time that Solomon, the builder of the temple, became fallen and corrupted until the children of Israel were carried away into captivity was a period of four hundred years. During this time God expected a change among the children of Israel, but year by year they stubbornly remained the same. This forced God to give them up. Although God gave up Israel, He kept the principle, found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, of gaining some overcomers so that He could still have a lineage of people on earth to maintain His economy and carry it out. All the real prophets in the times of the kings and the captivity, such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jonah, Daniel, and Zechariah, were overcomers. Through such overcomers Ezra and Nehemiah were awakened to realize that they had to go back to the land of their fathers.

The entire history of Israel is a type for God's economy. The fulfillment of this type can be seen in the history of Christianity. Today Christianity is in captivity, but we in the Lord's recovery are outside the captivity. In the type, the Lord's recovery started with a small number, with ones such as Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Today the recovery may be small in number, but it is spreading into the captivity to call out more overcomers. The Lord's recovery is not to gain all the Christians in this age but to call out a smaller group to be the overcomers. In the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus repeatedly issues a call for the overcomers (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). These overcomers will become Mount Zion, the peak in God's accomplishment of His economy (14:1).

The Bible is one book consisting of two sections—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains many types and pictures, and in the New Testament we have the fulfillment of the typology in the Old Testament. Most fundamental Christians, however, pay attention only to part of the fulfillment of the Old Testament typology in the New Testament. In the recovery the Lord, by His mercy, has been continually showing us more and more concerning the

fulfillment of the Old Testament typology in the New Testament, especially in relation to God's economy.

In reading the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, we need to see the link between the Old Testament books of history and the New Testament. This link is God's economy for Christ and for Christ's Body. This link is shown in the kings' history, which includes the prophets as God's overcomers. Again and again, the prophets came in either to help the kings or to deal with them. For example, Nathan helped David and also rebuked him. Elijah dealt with Ahab; Elisha performed miracles in life; and Isaiah helped Hezekiah.

In the book of Isaiah two short prophecies clearly show the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Isaiah 7:14 says that a virgin would bring forth a son whose name would be called Immanuel. Isaiah 9:6 says that a son would be given to us and that his name would be called the mighty God and the eternal Father. These prophecies reveal that God would become a man as a little child. The mighty God, the eternal Father, became a man in order to make man God in life and in nature (but not in the Godhead). However, in order to be made God in this way, man first needed to be redeemed. Isaiah 53 is a strong chapter on the redemption of Christ. In His humanity the God who had become man was man's Redeemer, slain for man's sin. God redeemed man for the purpose of making the redeemed man God in life and in nature so that God can have a consummation of His economy in the Body of Christ as the enlargement of Christ. This Body of Christ will consummate in the New Jerusalem as God's full expression and enlargement for eternity. In typology the history of the kings is linked to God's becoming a man to redeem man back to Himself that He might make His redeemed people God in life and in nature so that He might have for eternity a universal, corporate expression of Himself. This, in brief, is God's economy.

Jesus, who is God become man, eventually became the life-giving Spirit in His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45b). The matters related to this are unveiled in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The New Testament shows us that Jesus is God becoming man through incarnation; that He

lived a human life on earth; that He died an all-inclusive death, which solved all the problems in the universe, including sin, death, Satan, the world, and the old creation; and that He entered into resurrection. In resurrection He uplifted His humanity into divinity, regenerating His humanity to be the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4; Acts 13:33; Rom. 8:29). In that same birth we, the many members of Christ, were regenerated with Him (1 Pet. 1:3). In and through His resurrection Christ also became the life-giving Spirit.

The life-giving Spirit, who is the all-inclusive Christ, is the consummation of the processed and consummated Triune God. This Spirit is also the reality of Christ's resurrection. Furthermore, this Spirit, the consummated Triune God, is the pneumatic Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God. The aggregate of all this is the life-giving Spirit. Such a marvelous matter is unveiled in detail in the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation.

The goal of God's economy is to work on His redeemed people in order to make them God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. This can be accomplished only through, by, with, and in the life-giving Spirit. It is crucial for us in the Lord's recovery to see that our Christ today is in resurrection and that in resurrection He is the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God. We have Him as the all-inclusive, compound Spirit in our spirit. Now every day we must do everything in our spirit in order that this life-giving Spirit may transform us, conform us, and eventually glorify us that we might be made God in life and in nature.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

THE REIGN OF HOSHEA OVER ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 17

In this message we will first consider the reign of Hoshea over Judah and then give a word related to the fulfillment of God's economy as typified in the books of history in the Old Testament.

I. REIGNING FOR NINE YEARS

The account of the reign of Hoshea over Israel is found in 2 Kings 17. Hoshea began to reign in the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah and reigned in Samaria for nine years (v. 1).

II. DOING EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF JEHOVAH

Hoshea did evil in the sight of Jehovah, but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him (v. 2).

III. THE KING OF ASSYRIA COMING TO ATTACK HIM

The king of Assyria came to attack Hoshea, and Hoshea became his servant and rendered presents to him (v. 3).

IV. CONSPIRING AGAINST THE KING OF ASSYRIA

Hoshea conspired against the king of Assyria, sending messengers to the king of Egypt and not sending a present to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria shut Hoshea up and bound him in prison (v. 4).

V. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL BEING CARRIED AWAY INTO ASSYRIA

The king of Assyria invaded the whole land, going up against Samaria, besieging it three years, and capturing it

in the ninth year of Hoshea, and carrying the people away into Assyria. All this happened because of the sins of the people of Israel (vv. 5-41).

A. Forsaking the Very God Who Brought Them out of Egypt

The people of Israel forsook Jehovah their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and feared other gods (v. 7).

B. Walking in the Statutes of the Nations

The children of Israel walked in the statutes of the nations and in the statutes made by the kings of Israel, secretly doing things against Jehovah their God that were not right (vv. 8-9a).

C. Doing Wicked Things and Serving Idols

The children of Israel built high places in all their cities. They set up pillars and idols on every high hill and under every green tree; they burned incense in all the high places; and they did wicked things and served idols to provoke Jehovah to anger (vv. 9b-12).

D. Not Hearing the Prophets Sent to Them by Jehovah

In His love God sent the prophets to the people of Israel to testify to them against their evils, sins, and wickednesses and to help them come back to God, but they would not return. Instead of hearing the prophets, the people stiffened their necks (vv. 13-14).

E. Rejecting God's Statutes and His Covenant

The people rejected God's statutes and His covenant and followed the nations in their vanity to worship idols (vv. 15-17).

F. Jehovah Removing Them from Their Land

The people provoked Jehovah their God to such an anger that He removed them, both Israel and Judah, from their

land to the heathen world (vv. 18-23). Their wickedness went to the extent that God could no longer tolerate them but gave them up and let them be carried away to Assyria.

G. The King of Assyria Bringing People from Babylon and Other Heathen Cities to the Cities of Samaria

According to verses 24 through 41 the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon and other heathen cities to the cities of Samaria. These people did not fear Jehovah and were punished by Jehovah with lions. Then the king of Assyria used a Jewish priest to teach the heathens the customs of Israel and the things concerning God. Eventually, these heathens intermarried with the Jews who remained in Israel. As a result, a confused and mixed worship was produced, such as that referred to by the Samaritan woman in John 4:20. This confusion and mixture may be regarded as a type of the kind of worship, found especially in Catholicism, that is a mixture of the worship of God with heathen practices and the pagan worship of idols.

At this juncture I would like to say a word concerning God's economy. Christ's incarnation and redemption constitute the first part of the fulfillment of God's economy as typified in the books of history in the Old Testament. In his prophecy Isaiah refers us to Christ's incarnation (7:14; 9:6) and Christ's redemption (ch. 53). Christ came as God becoming a man, a God-man with two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. After going into death, He entered into resurrection, and in resurrection He accomplished many things. He brought His humanity into divinity, being designated the firstborn Son of God with His humanity (Rom. 1:4). In Christ's resurrection all of God's chosen people were regenerated together with Christ and in Christ (1 Pet. 1:3).

In resurrection Christ also became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) as the consummation of the Triune God. This divine, all-inclusive Spirit enters into our spirit and mingles with our regenerated spirit, causing God and man, man and God, to become one in the mingled spirit. The two spirits are now mingled together as one entity (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:16).

This mingled spirit is the beginning of the Body of Christ and will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Today we need to care for this mingled spirit. If we are not clear concerning this but instead, like Judaism and Christianity, pay our attention to outward things, we will be distracted, even deceived and seduced, from the central matter in God's economy.

Christ today is the heavenly High Priest (Heb. 4:14), a Minister in the heavens (8:1-2), the Mediator of a new covenant (9:15), and the Executor of the new testament (9:16-17). As such, He is working not only in the heavens but also in our regenerated spirit, bringing heaven to us and joining us to heaven. The way for us to follow Christ is to remain, live, walk, and have our being in the mingled spirit. This spontaneously causes us to live Christ, magnify Christ, and be one with Christ (Phil. 1:20-21). The issue of such a life is the Body of Christ, the church.

We should do everything, great or small, in and according to the mingled spirit, always checked by the regulations of the Bible. The Bible's teaching urges and inspires us to live in the spirit, to walk in the spirit, and to do everything according to the spirit. For instance, the way we style our hair and the way we speak with our spouse and children should be according to the spirit. When we visit others for the preaching of the gospel, we should contact them not according to our self but according to the mingled spirit. Furthermore, in the church meetings our singing, praying, praising, and prophesying should all be in the spirit and according to the spirit.

Today's Christians know about the Holy Spirit, but very few know the wonderful life-giving Spirit. Concerning this all-inclusive, compound Spirit, five portions of the Holy Word are crucial. Unfortunately, these portions are neglected by many fundamental Christians.

First, John 7:39 says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." The Spirit was there in eternity and is mentioned in Genesis 1:2, but in John 7:39 this Spirit had not been consummated because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Through the processes of death and

resurrection Christ was glorified (Luke 24:26) and became the life-giving Spirit.

Second, 1 Corinthians 15:45b says, "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Contrary to the concept of those who hold to the traditional teaching regarding the Trinity, this verse reveals that in resurrection Christ is now the life-giving Spirit. The life-giving Spirit is the divine Spirit who gives life (John 6:63a).

Third, 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "The Lord is the Spirit." According to the context of this chapter, the Lord here is the crucified and resurrected Christ, who in His resurrection became the Spirit. As we behold Him, we are transformed into His image by the Lord Spirit (v. 18), the life-giving Spirit who is the very resurrected Christ.

Fourth, the book of Revelation speaks of the "seven Spirits" (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The life-giving Spirit, who is the pneumatic Christ, the consummation of the Triune God, is intensified to be the seven Spirits.

Fifth, Exodus 30:23-25 speaks of the holy anointing oil, composed of olive oil, signifying the Spirit of God, compounded with four spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia, signifying respectively the death of Christ, the effectiveness of Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, and the power of Christ's resurrection. The anointing oil signifies the compound anointing Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27).

In the Lord's recovery today, we should pay our full attention to the mingled spirit, the Spirit mingled with our spirit, and we should live, walk, and have our being according to this mingled spirit.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWENTY

THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH OVER JUDAH

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 18—20

The best reign of all the kings was that of Hezekiah over Judah. In this message we will first consider the reign of Hezekiah and then speak further concerning the intrinsic connection between the books of history in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New Testament.

I. REIGNING FOR TWENTY-NINE YEARS

Hezekiah began to reign at the age of twenty-five, in the third year of Hoshea king of Israel, and reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem (18:1-2).

II. DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF JEHOVAH

Verses 3 through 6 show us that Hezekiah did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done. Hezekiah removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the Asherah. Also, he broke in pieces the bronze serpent made by Moses which Hezekiah called Nehushtan (meaning "a piece of bronze") and to which the children of Israel burned incense. Moses, according to God's instructions, had made that bronze serpent in order to rescue the people from death. However, in their superstition they eventually regarded the bronze serpent as an idol, and for this reason Hezekiah broke it in pieces. Hezekiah clung to Jehovah and did not turn away from following Him but kept His commandments and trusted in Him, so that after him there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor anyone who was before him.

III. JEHOVAH BEING WITH HIM

Jehovah was with Hezekiah, and everywhere he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and struck the Philistines (vv. 7-8).

IV. THE INVASION OF THE ASSYRIANS

In 18:9—19:37 we have an account of the invasion of the Assyrians.

A. The Invasion under Shalmaneser King of Assyria

In the fourth year of Hezekiah, the seventh year of Hoshea king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it (v. 9). At the end of three years, in the sixth year of Hezekiah and the ninth year of Hoshea, Shalmaneser took Samaria and carried Israel away captive (vv. 10-11; 17:3-6). This took place because Israel would not listen to the voice of Jehovah nor do it (18:12).

B. The Attacking and Challenging of Sennacherib King of Assyria

In 18:13—19:37 we read of the attacking and challenging of Sennacherib king of Assyria with insult and blasphemy.

1. Going Up against All the Fortified Cities of Judah

Sennacherib went up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them (18:13).

2. Hezekiah Subjecting Himself to Him

Hezekiah king of Judah subjected himself to Sennacherib. As Sennacherib imposed upon him, Hezekiah paid him quite a great amount of silver and gold from the temple of Jehovah and the treasuries of the king's house (vv. 14-16).

3. Challenging with Insult and Blasphemy

Sennacherib challenged Hezekiah with insult and blasphemy through Rab-shakeh with his army (vv. 17-37; 19:8-13).

4. Hezekiah Appealing to Isaiah the Prophet

Hezekiah appealed to Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah told him that Jehovah would cause the king of Assyria to return to his land and to fall by the sword in his own land (19:1-7).

5. Hezekiah Praying to Jehovah

Hezekiah went up to the temple of Jehovah, spread the challenging letter before Jehovah, and prayed to Jehovah, asking for salvation (vv. 14-19).

6. Jehovah Answering Hezekiah through Isaiah the Prophet

Jehovah answered Hezekiah through Isaiah the prophet, saying that He would turn the king of Assyria back by hooking him in his nose and bridling him in his lips and that Jerusalem would be preserved for His own sake and for the sake of David His servant (vv. 20-34).

7. An Angel of Jehovah Going Out and Slaughtering the Assyrians' Camp

In that night an angel of Jehovah went out and slaughtered the Assyrians' camp of 185,000, and Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went back to dwell in Nineveh. Eventually he was killed, probably by his sons, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place (vv. 35-37).

V. THE HEALING OF JEHOVAH

Second Kings 20:1-11 tells us about Jehovah's healing of Hezekiah.

A. Hezekiah Becoming Mortally Ill

Hezekiah became mortally ill, and Jehovah told him through Isaiah the prophet that he was about to die (v. 1).

B. Hezekiah Praying to Jehovah

Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah. Through Isaiah the prophet Jehovah told Hezekiah that He would heal him, add to his life fifteen years, and deliver him and Jerusalem from the

king of Assyria for His own sake and for the sake of David His servant (vv. 2-6).

C. Isaiah Recovering Hezekiah

Isaiah recovered Hezekiah with a cake of figs (v. 7).

D. Hezekiah Wanting a Sign

Hezekiah wanted a sign, and Jehovah gave him a sign—the shadow which had descended on the steps of Ahaz went backward ten steps (vv. 8-11).

VI. THE FAILURE OF HEZEKIAH

In verses 12 through 19 we see the failure of Hezekiah.

A. The King of Babylon Sending Letters and a Gift to Hezekiah

The king of Babylon sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah because of his recovery (v. 12).

B. Hezekiah Showing All His Treasury and His Armory and Everything Found among His Treasures

Hezekiah showed the ones from Babylon all his treasury and his armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that he did not show them (v. 13). His wanting to make a show offended God. God hates man's pride. Thus, we should never try to glorify ourselves. In the Lord's work we need to learn the lesson of trying our best to hide ourselves, concealing our masterpieces from the eyes of man. This will please God.

C. Hezekiah Being Condemned by God through His Prophet Isaiah

Because of what Hezekiah did, he was condemned by God through His prophet Isaiah. Isaiah told him that the days were now coming when everything that was in his house and that his fathers had laid up as a treasure would be carried away to Babylon and nothing would be left. Isaiah went on to say that the Babylonians would take away some of

Hezekiah's sons and make them eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (vv. 14-18).

D. Hezekiah Answering That the Word of Jehovah Was Good

Hezekiah answered that the word of Jehovah was good and that it was good that there would be peace and truth (stability) in his days (v. 19). I am bothered by Hezekiah's answer, for it indicates that he was somewhat selfish, caring for himself but not for his descendants. This indicates that he was not that weighty in the matter of spirituality.

At this juncture we should note that the portion from 18:13—20:19 is similar to Isaiah 36:1—39:8, with the omission of the song of Hezekiah recorded in Isaiah 38:9-20. Concerning this I would ask you to consult messages nineteen and twenty in the Life-study of Isaiah, given from the angle of Hezekiah's spirituality.

VII. HEZEKIAH MAKING THE POOL AND THE CONDUIT

Hezekiah made the pool and the conduit and brought the water into the city. He slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his place (2 Kings 20:20-21).

Let us now turn to the matter of God's economy. God's economy is centered in Christ with His organic Body, the church, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Regarding God's economy, the intrinsic connection between the books of history in the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New Testament is in Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6. These verses indicate that God would put humanity upon Himself, mingling His divinity with humanity. Through His incarnation Christ became the God-man, a person both divine and human, having His divinity mingled with His humanity. The incarnation was, therefore, a great event in the universe.

The New Testament clearly reveals that Christ's ministry has two sections. The first section, from His incarnation to His death to accomplish God's eternal redemption, is in the four Gospels. The second section is presented in Acts through Revelation.

After accomplishing God's redemption through His death,

Christ entered into resurrection. In resurrection Christ's humanity was uplifted into divinity and Christ was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4). His humanity was regenerated, and in resurrection He was born as God's firstborn Son. As the only begotten Son of God in eternity, Christ had only divinity without humanity. But in His economy God intends to join Himself to man and mingle Himself with man. Thus, when Christ was resurrected, He was begotten to be God's firstborn Son in His humanity (Acts 13:33). At the same time He regenerated all the believers in a single, great corporate birth (1 Pet. 1:3). In His resurrection Christ, as a man in the flesh, became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). Whereas He redeemed us by His death, He regenerated us by the life-giving Spirit.

God's economy is to make all the redeemed ones, all the believers in Christ, God-men. God's desire is not to have good men—God's desire is to have God-men. Christ, the unique God-man, is the model, the prototype, used by God to have a "mass production" of millions of God-men. Regeneration brings God into us, making us God-men. As God-men we should have a God-man's living, continually rejecting our natural man and living by the very God who is life in us. As God-men we should deny our natural life and apply the divine life in our daily life.

After regeneration the life-giving Spirit, the consummation and totality of the processed Triune God, first sanctifies us; second, renews us (Titus 3:5); third, transforms us (2 Cor. 3:18); and fourth, conforms us to God's image (Rom. 8:29), making us the same as God in appearance, element, and essence. Eventually, when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will glorify us, saturating our entire being with His glory. Hence, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification are the steps of Christ's ministry in resurrection.

After Christ entered into resurrection, becoming the life-giving Spirit and the Firstborn of many sons, He ascended to the heavens and was assigned by God to be the Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and was exalted to be the Leader and the Savior (5:31). He is also our High Priest, interceding for us

before God (Heb. 8:1; 7:25-26), the Mediator and Executor of the new covenant (8:6; 9:16-17), and a Minister in the heavens (8:1-2), ministering all the heavenly things into us in the steps mentioned above.

If we would understand the second section of Christ's ministry and know what Christ is doing now in the heavens, we need all the Epistles from Romans through Revelation. In his fourteen Epistles Paul did a wonderful job of unveiling how Christ as the ascended One in the heavens ministers Himself as the life-giving Spirit, as the pneumatic Christ, as the embodiment of the processed Triune God in His resurrection, to transform us from clay into something precious, making us the same as He, not in the Godhead but in His essence, in His element, in His nature, in His life, and in His appearance. This is the economy of God, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

THE REIGNS OF MANASSEH, AMON, AND JOSIAH OVER JUDAH

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 21:1—23:30

In this message we will first consider the reigns of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah over Judah and then say a word concerning the essence of the typology in the books of history in the Old Testament.

I. THE REIGN OF MANASSEH

The record of the reign of Manasseh is found in 21:1-18.

A. Reigning for Fifty-five Years

At the age of twelve, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, began to reign over Judah and reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem (v. 1).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Manasseh did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, like the abominations of the nations. He rebuilt the high places which his father had destroyed and raised up altars to Baal, as Ahab king of Israel had done. Manasseh worshipped all the host of heaven and built altars in the house of Jehovah and altars to all the host of heaven in both courts of the house of Jehovah. Furthermore, he burned his son as a sacrifice to an idol, practiced soothsaying and enchantments, appointed mediums and spiritists, put the engraved image of the Asherah in the temple, and shed very much innocent blood. Manasseh led the people of Judah astray to do more evil than the nations, not listening to the law given through Moses and doing what was evil in the sight of Jehovah beyond measure and provoking Him to anger (vv. 2-9, 15-16).

C. Jehovah Bringing Evil upon Jerusalem and Judah

Because of all that Manasseh did, Jehovah would then bring evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, as He had done over Israel and the house of Ahab. He would wipe Jerusalem like a pan and deliver the people into the hand of their enemies (vv. 10-14).

Hezekiah was the best king and his son Manasseh was the worst. It is hard to explain how such a good king could have such an evil son. It was Manasseh's sin in particular that caused God to determine no longer to tolerate the people but to destroy the temple, devastate the holy land, and send the people away into captivity. With the reign of Manasseh God's toleration reached its limit, and He gave up the holy people, the holy temple, the holy city, and the holy land.

D. Manasseh Sleeping with His Fathers

Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his own house, and Amon his son reigned in his place (vv. 17-18).

II. THE REIGN OF AMON

Second Kings 21:19-26 gives an account of the reign of Amon.

A. Reigning for Two Years

Amon began to reign over Judah at the age of twenty-two and reigned for two years in Jerusalem (v. 19).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Amon did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as Manasseh his father had done. He walked in all the way that his father had walked and served the idols that his father had served, forsaking Jehovah and not walking in His way (vv. 20-22).

C. His Servants Conspiring against Him and Killing Him

Amon's servants conspired against him and killed him.

The people struck down all the rebels and made Amon's son Josiah king in his place (vv. 23-24).

D. Buried in the Garden of Uzza

Amon was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza (vv. 25-26).

III. THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

Second Kings 22:1—23:30 describes the reign of Josiah.

A. Reigning for Thirty-one Years

Josiah began to reign over Judah at the age of eight and reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem (22:1).

B. Doing What Was Right in the Eyes of Jehovah

Josiah did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning to the right or to the left (v. 2; 23:25).

C. Repairing What Was Broken in the Temple

In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah repaired what was broken in the temple of God (22:3-7).

D. Hearing the Book of the Law, Found by the High Priest in the Temple

The book of the law which was found in the temple by the high priest was read to Josiah by the scribe. When Josiah heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes and commanded the high priest and his servants to inquire of Jehovah for him, for the people, and for all of Judah concerning the words of the law (vv. 8-13).

E. Receiving the Answer of Jehovah through Huldah the Prophetess

Through Huldah the prophetess Josiah received the answer of Jehovah that, because his heart was tender and he humbled himself before Jehovah, tearing his garments and weeping before Him, Jehovah would gather him to his

fathers, to his grave in peace. Josiah's eyes would not see all the evil which God would bring upon the land (vv. 14-20).

F. Making a Covenant before Jehovah

Josiah gathered to him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people and read to them all the words of the book of the covenant. Then he made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah and keep His commandments, His testimonies, and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, so as to establish the words of this covenant which were written in this book. All the people stood with the covenant (23:1-3).

G. Making a Thorough Clearance of All the Idol Worshippers throughout the Country

Josiah made a thorough clearance of all the idol worshippers throughout the country (vv. 4-20, 24). He removed, did away with, and burned the idols, especially those set up in the quarters of the temple (vv. 6, 11, 14, 24). He destroyed all the high places and other places for idol worship and the altars with the vessels built for the idols, particularly the altar, the high place, which Jeroboam the son of Nebat built, for the fulfillment of the prophecy by the man of God (1 Kings 13:1-3; 2 Kings 23:4, 7-10, 12-19). He cut off all the idol worshippers and evildoers in the land (vv. 5, 8a, 20, 24a).

H. Holding the Passover to Jehovah

Josiah held the Passover to Jehovah according to all that was written in the book of the covenant (vv. 21-23).

I. Jehovah Not Turning from His Great Burning Anger against Judah

Regardless of how much Josiah had done that had pleased Jehovah, He still would not turn from His great burning anger against Judah because of all the provocations by Manasseh. He would still remove Judah from His sight, as He had done with Israel, and would cast off the city of Jerusalem, which He had chosen, and the temple where He had put His name

(vv. 26-27). Josiah's goodness could not rescue Judah out of God's destroying hand.

J. Josiah Frustrating Pharaoh Neco's Expedition

When Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates, Josiah frustrated Pharaoh Neco's expedition and was killed by him (v. 29).

K. Buried in Jerusalem by His Servants

Josiah was brought to Jerusalem by his servants and was buried there in his grave (v. 30).

The history recorded in the Old Testament is a type. The history books were put into the Holy Scriptures because, in typology, they give us a vivid view of God's economy. The essence of the typology of the Old Testament history is God's economy with Christ and His Body as the center and reality.

In one of the books of history, 2 Samuel, we see that David, a man according to God's heart, wanted to build a house, a temple, for God (7:2-3). However, God did not need that kind of house (vv. 4-7). Rather, God wanted to build David a house (v. 11b). Through a prophecy in typology, God told David that eventually the house that He would build for him would have a seed and that this seed would be God's Son. The seed would therefore be both human and divine. It would be a human seed, yet it would also be God's Son. Christ was God becoming the seed of David. This means that God Himself, the divine One, became a human seed, the seed of a man, David. This seed was Jesus, the God-man, Jehovah the Savior.

Jesus is our Creator becoming our Savior, our salvation. He is the creating God who became a man by being born of a virgin. He remained in the womb for nine months according to the principle ordained by God for man. When He came out of that womb, He was no longer only God; He had become the God-man. This God-man lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years and then entered into death through crucifixion. In His crucifixion He accomplished redemption and terminated the old creation.

The death of Christ was the death of a God-man. In one of his hymns Charles Wesley wrote, "Amazing love! how can it be / That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" (*Hymns,* #296). The One who died on the cross and shed His blood was a man, yet Acts 20:28 tells us that this blood was God's own blood. The death of this wonderful God-man was all-inclusive. It terminated the entire old creation. The One who created Adam died on the cross as the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the last of mankind, to end Adam.

Within Adam there is a sinful nature, or sin. When Adam was terminated by the cross, the sin within Adam's nature was also terminated. Furthermore, this sinful nature in Adam is just Satan himself. Thus, when Adam's nature, sin, was terminated, Satan was also destroyed (Heb. 2:14). In addition, the world, which was invented by Satan and is one with Satan, was also destroyed through the death of Christ on the cross (John 12:31). Christ's wonderful death ended the fallen man, and through this He ended man, sin, Satan, and the world. At the same time, through His death Christ released the divine life within Him to be dispensed into all God's chosen and redeemed people, regenerating them with the divine life. Then Christ entered into resurrection, and in resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit.

The life-giving Spirit is the Creator God who became a man, lived a human life, passed through death, and entered into resurrection. Today our God, unlike the God of the Jews, is not only divine but also human. He is not only God but also man, with Christ's death and its effectiveness and with His resurrection with its power, all compounded together to be the life-giving Spirit, the ultimate consummation of the processed Triune God. The Triune God was embodied in Christ, who eventually became the life-giving Spirit, the pneumatic Christ, who is the reality of resurrection. Today we have the consummated Triune God, the pneumatic Christ, and the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit who is the reality of resurrection.

Resurrection is not just a matter; resurrection is a living person, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 11:25). He is the resurrection and in resurrection He has become the life-giving

Spirit. For us today the reality of resurrection is Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

Christ is now in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit, the consummation of the processed Triune God. Since He is in resurrection, we, His believers, should also be in resurrection and live in resurrection. Resurrection means that all the old, natural things have been terminated and that something new and spiritual has been germinated. This is resurrection—the termination of the natural and the germination of the spiritual, to transform the natural into the spiritual. In resurrection we do not live a natural life but a life that was terminated in the old nature and germinated in the new nature to make us members of Christ.

Christ today is a corporate Christ with many members (1 Cor. 12:12). This means that He is not only the Head but the Head with the Body. Here we have the very essence of God's economy, with Christ and His Body as its center and reality.

In this economy God became man in order to make man God in life and nature (but not in the Godhead) through a marvelous process. With God this process was incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. With us this process is regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. God has become man, and eventually man will become God in life and in nature. Then the eternal economy of God will be accomplished.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

THE REIGNS OF JEHOAHAZ, JEHOIAKIM, JEHOIACHIN, AND ZEDEKIAH OVER JUDAH AND THE GOVERNING OF GEDALIAH

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 23:31—25:30

Second Kings 23:31—25:30, which covers the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah and the governing of Gedaliah, tells us of the tragedy of the rottenness of the children of Israel. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah became totally corrupted, forcing God to terminate them. First, God sent the Assyrians to take over the northern kingdom of Israel. On the one hand, many of the people were taken as captives to Assyria. On the other hand, the Assyrians brought in heathens, who settled in the vacant land. This produced a mixture and a confusion. The southern kingdom of Judah should have been warned by what had happened to Israel, but the people continued in their evil way more than ever. This forced God to take action through the Babylonians. The temple was burned; the walls of Jerusalem, the holy city, were torn down; the holy land was devastated; and the holy people were taken captive.

I. THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ

In 23:31-34 we have an account of the reign of Jehoahaz.

A. Reigning for Three Months

Jehoahaz began to reign in Jerusalem at the age of twenty-three and reigned for three months (v. 31).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Eyes of Jehovah

Jehoahaz did what was evil in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his fathers did (v. 32).

C. Pharaoh Neco Imprisoning Him

Pharaoh Neco imprisoned Jehoahaz so that he might not reign in Jerusalem. He also imposed on the land of Judah a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold (v. 33).

D. Jehoahaz Dying in Egypt

Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Pharaoh Neco then brought Jehoahaz to Egypt, and Jehoahaz died there (v. 34).

II. THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM

The reign of Jehoiakim is recorded in 23:35—24:6.

A. Reigning for Eleven Years

Jehoiakim began to reign in Jerusalem at the age of twenty-five and reigned for eleven years (23:36).

B. Paying to Pharaoh Neco Silver and Gold

Jehoiakim paid to Pharaoh Neco silver and gold which he exacted from the people (v. 35).

C. Doing What Was Evil in the Eyes of Jehovah

Jehoiakim did what was evil in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his fathers did (v. 37).

D. Serving Nebuchadnezzar and Rebelling against Him

Jehoiakim served Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon for three years and then rebelled against him (24:1).

E. Jehovah Sending the Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah

Jehovah sent the Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah to destroy it, according to Jehovah's word spoken through the prophets, and to remove the people out of His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done (vv. 2-4).

F. Sleeping with His Fathers

Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and his son Jehoiachin reigned in his place (vv. 5-6).

III. THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN

Second Kings 24:7-16 speaks of the reign of Jehoiachin.

A. Reigning for Three Months

Jehoiachin began to reign in Jerusalem at the age of eighteen and reigned for three months (v. 8).

B. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Jehoiachin did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father had done (v. 9).

C. The King of Egypt Not Coming out of His Land Again

The king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt up to the river Euphrates (v. 7).

D. Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon Coming to Take Over Jerusalem

In the eighth year of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to take over Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his captains, and his eunuchs surrendered to him. The king of Babylon took all the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king's house and cut in pieces all the golden vessels which Solomon had made in Jehovah's temple. Nebuchadnezzar

carried away into exile all the people of Jerusalem, all the captains, Jehoiachin the king with his mother, wives, eunuchs, and all the leading men of the land. In addition, he carried away all the seven thousand men of valor, the one thousand craftsmen and smiths, and all the mighty men fit for war (vv. 10-16).

Here we should note that in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year of his enthronement, released Jehoiachin from prison. He spoke kindly to Jehoiachin and set his throne above the throne of all the kings who were with him in Babylon. Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and ate his food in the presence of the king of Babylon continually all the days of his life, with a particular portion of allowance for each day (25:27-30).

IV. THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH

Second Kings 24:17—25:21 tells us of the reign of Zedekiah.

A. Made King by the King of Babylon

Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, was made king by the king of Babylon to replace Jehoiachin, changing his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah (24:17).

B. Reigning for Eleven Years

Zedekiah began to reign in Jerusalem at the age of twenty-one and reigned for eleven years (v. 18).

C. Doing What Was Evil in the Sight of Jehovah

Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that Jehoiakim had done, and he rebelled against the king of Babylon (vv. 19-20).

D. Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon Coming to Jerusalem and Building a Siege Wall against It

In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and built a siege wall against it all around until

the city was breached in the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. The army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, captured him, brought him up to the king of Babylon, and pronounced judgment upon him. They slaughtered Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, put out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him with bronze fetters, and brought him to Babylon (25:1-7).

E. Nebuzaradan Coming to Jerusalem to Burn the House of Jehovah

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard and servant of Nebuchadnezzar, came to Jerusalem to burn the house of Jehovah, the king's house, every great house, and all the houses of Jerusalem. All the army of the Chaldeans broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan carried away into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the multitude, but left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and field workers. The Chaldeans broke in pieces the bronze pillars and the bronze sea in the temple of God and carried the bronze to Babylon with the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, all the bronze vessels, and censers and bowls of fine gold and fine silver. The captain of the bodyguard took the chief priest, the second priest, the three doorkeepers, one eunuch, five men from the king's inner circle, the scribe of the captain of the army, and sixty men of the people of the land and brought them to the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon struck them down and killed them. Thus was Judah carried away into exile out of their land (vv. 8-21).

V. THE GOVERNING OF GEDALIAH

Verses 22 through 26 are a record of the governing of Gedaliah.

A. Nebuchadnezzar Appointing Gedaliah over the People Who Were Left in the Land of Judah

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah over the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had left in the land of Judah (v. 22). When

all the captains of the forces heard about this, they came to Gedaliah, and Gedaliah swore to them and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans; dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you" (vv. 23-24).

B. Ishmael Coming with Ten Men and Striking Down Gedaliah

In the seventh month Ishmael, one of the royal seed, came with ten men and struck down Gedaliah and the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him. All the people and the captains of the forces escaped to Egypt, being afraid of the Chaldeans (vv. 25-26).

Eventually, after being ruled by the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, Israel became part of the Roman Empire. Shortly after the Roman Empire took over the holy land, the Lord Jesus was born. The lineage of Christ's genealogy became very thin, but we thank and praise the Lord that in His sovereignty the lineage of the genealogy of Christ was never broken. The royal Davidic family was destroyed, but God kept David's lineage so that He could come to be a man through incarnation. This brought God to humanity and into humanity. This changed the age in the whole universe, including the heavens.

God came to be a man and lived on earth, entering into death and passing through death into resurrection. In resurrection the incarnated God, as the last Adam in the flesh, became the life-giving Spirit. The God-man's becoming the life-giving Spirit is even greater than the incarnation. The incarnation brought God into one person, but the last Adam becoming the life-giving Spirit brought God into millions of the human race. We all were regenerated through Christ's resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). God became a man, and this man became the life-giving Spirit to germinate millions of God's chosen, redeemed people, to live in them, to make an abode with them, and even to build a home in them with Himself as the element. This building is a constitution that makes Him one with all the redeemed to be a great universal new man. The Head of this new man is Christ, and the Body

is composed of the millions of God's redeemed and regenerated people.

Paul's Epistles tell us that, as believers in Christ, we have to live in Christ, who as the life-giving Spirit is the reality of resurrection. Resurrection means the termination of all that is old and natural and a new beginning through germination. In the sight of God, everything of the old creation has been terminated, and the new creation has been germinated. We are the new creation, which is altogether in resurrection.

However, the majority of those in the Lord's recovery do not live in resurrection actually and practically. The saints may have good character and good behavior, but this good behavior is mainly according to the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the one hand, we know about the life of resurrection, but, on the other hand, unconsciously and unintentionally we live a life according to the principle of good and evil, not according to the principle of life.

From the very beginning, God's intention was that man would live not by his own life but by God's life. For this reason, after God created man, He indicated to him that he should partake of the tree of life and thereby take God as life and live by this life. This means that the man created by God needed to be regenerated. Regeneration does not mean that man became so fallen that he needed another life. Even before man fell and before sin entered into the human race, God intended to regenerate man.

As those who have been regenerated, we should not live by our natural, human life but by God's life in resurrection. We now have two lives in us: the created life and the regenerated life, the natural life and the resurrection life. Our natural life—our self, our old man, our flesh—has been terminated by Christ on the cross. We have not only been terminated but also regenerated. We were terminated by Christ's death and we were germinated by Christ's resurrection, the reality of which is the Spirit mingled with our spirit. Now every day, in all things great and small, including the way we comb our hair and speak to others, we should not do

anything by ourselves but do everything by the One who is joined to us and mingled with us. This is to apply the death of Christ in our daily life.

If we practice this life, then in our experience we will be crucified and conformed to the death of Christ. Then we will be able to say with Paul that we have been crucified with Christ and that we no longer live but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). When Paul was in prison, he could declare that for him to live was Christ (Phil. 1:21). He was one with Christ and he lived Christ and magnified Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit (vv. 19-20).

When Christ lived on earth, His life was pure and holy. Yet He never did anything by Himself nor spoke anything of Himself or from Himself. Whatever He did and spoke was by the Father (John 5:19, 30; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49-50). For thirty-three and a half years He lived a crucified life, always living by the Father. Now we are Christ's continuation, and we should live a crucified life every day. This is why we are told to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17). We need to inquire of Him in everything.

To live in resurrection means that we reject our natural life, that we deny it and put it on the cross and thus be conformed to the death of Christ. Then we are in resurrection, living by the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Christ, the consummated Triune God.

We need to remember that, as believers in Christ, we are particular persons—we are God-men. We are Christians, Christ-men. We should not live by ourselves. We should live by Him who is joined to us. This is to be conformed to Christ's death and to live in resurrection.

LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

A CONCLUDING WORD OF THE LIFE-STUDY OF THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS AMONG ISRAEL

This message is a concluding word of the life-study of the history of the kings among Israel.

THERE BEING FORTY-ONE KINGS IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

There were altogether forty-one kings in the history of Israel. The first three, Saul, David, and Solomon, reigned over the entire people of Israel. Nineteen kings, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, reigned over Judah in the south, and nineteen, from Jeroboam to Hoshea, reigned over Israel in the north.

NINE KINGS BEING COMPARATIVELY GOOD IN THE EYES OF GOD

Among these forty-one kings, nine, including David, were comparatively good in the eyes of God. Thirty, including Saul, were evil in the sight of God. Two, Solomon and Jehu, were partly good and partly evil.

Saul

In Saul's behavior, his performed humility in pretense, his self-interest seeking, and his ambition for the kingship not only for himself but also for his descendants were all exposed and showed that he was not building the kingdom of God but a monarchy for himself and his descendants. This seduced him to forget about God and to contact a medium, a witch, concerning his fate.

David and Solomon

David behaved himself as a man according to God's heart

for God's delight, yet he committed an awful sin in indulging himself in sexual lust, offending God to the uttermost, so that in His Holy Word this evil is mentioned a few times (1 Kings 15:5; Matt. 1:6). He made himself a very negative example in indulging in lust and in marrying a Gentile wife. This first influenced Solomon in his indulging of lust and in the taking of heathen women as his wives, which seduced him into idolatry, causing the loss of a great part of David's God-given kingdom, and continually influenced most of the kings in the indulgence of lust and in idolatry.

Solomon, on the one hand, was very good in expressing the wisdom of God and in building the temple for God, but, on the other hand, he was evil in the indulgence of lust, taking seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, most of whom were heathen, and in idolatry in building high places with temples of idol worship for many heathen idols.

The Remaining Thirty-eight Kings

Of the remaining thirty-eight kings, only eight were comparatively good. Actually, however, they still were self-seeking and self-glorying, somewhat considering the kingdom of God among them something of their monarchies, not knowing God according to the way ordained by God, not denying themselves, their natural man, to live a life and carry out a career absolutely by the Spirit of God. Twenty-nine kings, among whom Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh were the worst, were totally evil in such matters as rebelling, murdering, usurping the throne, and shedding the blood of the innocent for the building of their monarchies without any care for the kingdom of God on the earth. One king, Jehu, was evil as well as good.

A FULL PICTURE OF HOW THE ELECT OF GOD COULD PARTAKE OF THE GOOD LAND AND ENJOY ALL ITS RIGHTS

The way in which these forty-one kings had their being, how they behaved, lived, moved, and acted in their daily living, activities, and careers, paints a full picture of how the elect of God could partake of the God-promised and God-given

good land and enjoy all its rights that they could become God's kingdom on the earth usurped by His enemy Satan. This typifies and signifies how we can partake of the all-inclusive Christ as the portion ordained by God for us and enjoy all the rights in Christ assigned to us by God that we, the people chosen and redeemed by God, can become God's kingdom in Christ and with Christ on the earth usurped by the evil one, God's enemy Satan.

THE ROOT OF THE EVIL OF THE EVIL KINGS BEING THEIR FORSAKING OF GOD AND THEIR TURNING AWAY TO THE PAGAN IDOLS

The root of the evil of the evil kings, like that of the evil of the people of Israel, was their forsaking the very God as the fountain of living waters and their turning away to the pagan idols as broken cisterns that hold no water (Jer. 2:13). These two evils drowned them in the death waters of idolatry, of the indulgence of lusts, and of injustice in shedding the blood of the innocent. Their evils offended their God to such an extent that He would not turn His anger from them but cast them off, first into the hands of the Assyrians and then into the hands of the Babylonians, who destroyed and burned the holy temple and the holy city, carried away into captivity the holy people to a pagan land of idol worship, and desolated the holy land for seventy years. Thus, they, as God's elect, lost the enjoyment of the God-given good land and, instead of remaining the citizens of God's kingdom in the holy land, they became captives in a heathen land.

A SERIOUS WARNING

The tragic result of such a pitiful history of the kings among God's chosen and blessed elect should be a serious warning to us, God's elect in the New Testament age, and should indicate to us how sober we should be to take heed to the particular points of each case. Just to be one who is according to God's heart, like David, and just to be partly right and good in the eyes of God, like some honest Christians, do not qualify us to partake of Christ in full and to enjoy all the rights in Him that we may become adequately

the church as the Body of Christ and as the kingdom of God and of Christ. Conformity to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection is required of us, the New Testament overcomers, that we may die to ourselves, our natural man, and live to God in resurrection. A life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, and moving and acting with Christ by the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit, doing everything in and according to the Spirit, is indispensable for us, God's New Testament seekers, to be winners in the racecourse of the divine life that we may fully enjoy Christ as the God-given good land in the church age and be gloriously rewarded to partake of Christ, in the fullest sense, in the kingdom age.

KINGS RULING FOR GOD'S ETERNAL ECONOMY

Every king should have had a thorough realization that they should be kings who did not rule a nation for their own interest and prosperity but ruled for God's eternal economy that God could have a nation on the earth to keep the land of Immanuel (Isa. 8:8) for Christ's reign and a people for a lineage of the genealogy to bring Christ to the earth. For this purpose they had to be a Nazarite to take God as their Head, their authority, and submit themselves to Him as His servants, and abandon all the pleasures (wines) of the world. But all the kings failed God in this, including David, the best one among them. Thus, they did not fulfill God's purpose for His economy. Rather, they lost their reign in God's kingdom, which is the top portion of the enjoyment of the good land (the all-inclusive Christ).

THE DEPUTY AUTHORITY OF GOD ON EARTH

To be a king among God's people is to be the deputy authority of God on the earth. The deputy authority of God on the earth is composed of God's oracle, the speaking of God, and God's authority, the ruling of God. Both items were entrusted to the priesthood, as in Moses, who was represented by Aaron the high priest. When the Aaronic priesthood started to wane, God raised up Samuel to speak for Him as a prophet (1 Sam. 3:19-21), and Samuel brought in the kingship for

God's authority (16:1-3). The kingship among all the kings of Israel was always regulated by the prophets, such as David by Nathan (2 Sam. 12), Ahab by Elijah (1 Kings 18), and Jehoram by Elisha (2 Kings 3), and was strengthened by the prophets, such as Hezekiah by Isaiah (2 Kings 18—20) and other kings by Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1-3). After the captivity of Israel due to the kings' failures, it was through the prophet Daniel's prayer that the captivity was returned (Dan. 6:10; 9:15-25).

We need to realize that these three classes of people—the priests, the kings, and the prophets—are the structure of the entire Old Testament. In a very real sense, the Old Testament is a history of the priests, the kings, and the prophets. God's deputy authority is composed of the priesthood and the kingship. However, both the priesthood and the kingship became a failure, and the prophets came in to strengthen, regulate, instruct, help, and support the weakened kingship.

The kings should always go along with God's oracle, that is, go along with the priests. Then God's deputy authority will be maintained on earth by the priests speaking as His oracle and by the kings ruling as His authority in His kingdom. These are basic principles for our knowing the Old Testament.