

YOUTH



LEVEL 7

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 4



The Kings of Judah

THE KINGS OF JUDAH

We learned in our last lesson that when the house of Israel turned away from their Creator God and began to disobey His laws, God allowed the nation of Assyria to carry them into captivity as punishment for their sins. The Assyrians moved them to far distant lands. In captivity, the house of Israel began to lose their identity, their language and their culture. They are now known as the “lost ten tribes of the house of Israel.” Descendents of these tribes still exist today, but even *they* do not know who they are.

All twelve tribes of the original nation of Israel did not go into captivity together. Remember, the nation became divided into two nations after King Solomon’s death. Because Solomon followed his many wives into pagan religions, God prophesied that the kingdom of Israel would be divided into two kingdoms.

The tribes of Judah and Benjamin and part of Levi became a separate kingdom from the other tribes and were called the house of Judah. The house of Judah did not go into captivity for its sins until later, but they did not lose their identity. God had promised David, who was of the tribe of Judah, that he would always have an heir to sit on his throne.

Before we begin to learn some important lessons from the examples of the kings of Judah, let’s quickly review how the original nation of Israel became divided.

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

In the symbolic language of Genesis 49:9, a lion is used to represent the tribe of Judah.

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COUNSEL WITHOUT WISDOM

When Solomon died, the people of Israel came to King Rehoboam and asked him to lighten the burden of heavy taxation his father had put upon them. Rehoboam knew he was young and inexperienced and needed counsel. So he gathered the counselors of his father and asked their advice. Being older and wiser, they told him to be gentle with the people and be their servant. In return Israel would serve him (I Kings 12:3-7).

But Rehoboam was too self-willed to obey their wise counsel. He preferred the advice of his young friends who told him the things he wanted to hear. They said he should be tough on the people. “Show them who is the boss!” they urged.

Of course this appealed to Rehoboam, who revelled in his newly-attained power. “I’m King,” he thought. “They have to do what I say.” To prove how tough he was, Rehoboam put heavier taxes upon the people and greater burdens than Solomon had put upon them. His foolish decision sealed his fate.

God used Rehoboam’s lack of wisdom to fulfill prophecy (I Kings 11:29-35). The people refused to live under such heavy burdens. Ten of the tribes rebelled against Rehoboam and the nation of Israel became divided into two nations or kingdoms called “houses.” God made Jeroboam King over the 10 tribes of the “house of Israel.” Jeroboam was not of royal blood, but was of the tribe of Ephraim and a former servant of Solomon. Only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and part of Levi remained

loyal to Rehoboam. They became known as the “house of Judah.”

THE TREASURES OF JUDAH TAKEN

From its beginning the house or kingdom of Judah took a path leading to ruin. To answer the following questions and fill in the missing words, read the story of Rehoboam’s reign beginning in II Chronicles 12:1: “And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he _____ the _____ of the Lord, and all Israel with him.”

To have God’s blessings and protection you have to follow God’s law. As Judah turned from God, God removed His blessing and protection. What happened when God removed His protection (verse 2)? _____

When Shishak the king of Egypt decided to invade Judah, God sent the prophet Shemaiah to Rehoboam with a message. “God says that because you have disobeyed His laws, He will allow Shishak, king of Egypt, and his army to attack you,” Shemaiah told Rehoboam.

God wanted the king to know why Judah would be punished, just as your parents tell you why they punish you when you have done something wrong. God does not punish people because He enjoys it. God punishes in order to correct people—to help them see the wrong they’ve done and to turn from disobedience, much the same as when your parents correct you when you disobey them.

Rehoboam was afraid that he would be killed and Jerusalem destroyed when Shishak attacked. What would you have done if you were Rehoboam? What did Rehoboam do (verse 6)? _____

Have you ever felt really sorry for something you did wrong? Maybe you knew you were going to be punished for it. That made you *really* sorry! Seeing your remorse, maybe your parents decided to not punish you or maybe they lessened your punishment.

God saw Rehoboam’s humble attitude and lessened the punishment. God spared the people’s lives but allowed the Egyptians to take Jerusalem and to carry away all the precious gold and silver treasures of the King’s palace and God’s Temple.

After Egypt’s invasion, Rehoboam ruled Judah for 12 more years. Verse 14 of II Chronicles 12 sums up Rehoboam’s reign: “And he did _____, because he _____ not his _____ to _____ the Lord.”

Rehoboam did not change his heart, or



The Kingdom of Israel became divided into the houses of Israel and Judah.

Map by Ramona Kareis

attitude, and seek God's way instead of his own way. Even though he was sorry that he was going to be punished he was not sorry for what he had *done!* He was not repentant. To be *truly* sorry means to *change* from doing wrong and start doing what is right. This is true repentance.

When Rehoboam died, his son Abijah ascended the throne of David. Abijah ruled for only three years. He was not a good king either (I Kings 15:3).

A good ruler must love his subjects. He must use his power and wealth to serve them. He must set a good example by obeying God. It is especially important for a leader to set a good example because people will follow a leader's example—even if it is a bad example.

The next king of Judah was Asa. He was a much better king than his father Abijah and his grandfather Rehoboam had been. Because Asa had grown up seeing how much trouble

idolatry had brought to the house of Judah, he tried very hard to rid the land of false religion. He destroyed all the pagan altars, idols and groves he could find. He even tore down the special idol his grandmother worshipped. As an example to others, Asa removed his idol-worshipping grandmother from being queen (I Kings 15:9-13).

Because of Asa's righteous leadership God caused the Kingdom of Judah to prosper once again. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and list *three* of the ways God promises to bless the nation that obeys Him. _____

GOD OVERTHROWS AN ARMY

King Zerah of Ethiopia (a country near Judah) saw how prosperous Judah was and began to covet the wealth of the land. So he marched his huge army toward Jerusalem.



King Asa commanded that false religion be destroyed from the land!

Asa sent his small army out to meet Zerah. Asa knew he needed God's help, so he prayed for God's divine intervention and put Judah's fate in God's hands. Follow the story in II Chronicles 14:9-15.

God heard Asa's prayer and by His supernatural power crushed Zerah's army. Then as the remainder panicked and fled, Asa's small army chased them until it was certain that the Ethiopians would not threaten Judah again. Asa's army gathered up the gold, silver, clothing and livestock left behind by the fleeing Ethiopians, and returned to Jerusalem.

You can learn a valuable lesson from the example of Asa. God is real and He can hear your prayer. He will help you if you trust Him and if you are doing your best to obey Him. Your situation may seem hopeless or impossible to you, but remember, *nothing* is impossible with God!

A LESSON LEARNED BUT NOT REMEMBERED

Many years after God had given Asa this great victory, Baasha, the king of the house of Israel, made war against the house of Judah. You would think that Asa would have remembered that God gave him victory in the past. But he didn't. Instead of trusting God, Asa hired the Syrians to fight against Israel.

God sent a prophet to Asa to tell him his mistake. Read what God said to King Asa in II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself _____ in the _____ of them whose _____ is _____ toward him. Herein thou hast _____: therefore from henceforth thou shalt _____."

God wants to help those who will always try to do what He says is right. If you obey your parents and follow what you are taught, God will see it and help you. Because Asa did not put his trust in God, God took away His special protection and Asa was troubled with

wars for the rest of his reign.

Asa died after 41 years as king of Judah and his son, Jehoshaphat, became the new king.

FAITH BRINGS DELIVERANCE

Some of the things that happened during Jehoshaphat's reign can teach us important lessons. The story of his reign is found in II Chronicles chapters 17-21.

Jehoshaphat reigned in Judah for 25 years. Like his father Asa, Jehoshaphat kept God's commandments. He even sent priests to all parts of his nation to instruct people how to live God's way. Because Jehoshaphat set himself to follow God's way, God blessed him greatly. God caused all the neighboring nations to be afraid to fight against Judah. Thus there was peace in the land. The Philistines and Arabians gave gifts of silver and herds of animals to Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat prospered so greatly that he had to build new cities just to store all his wealth (II Chron. 17:1-12).

Evil king Ahab of Israel saw how prosperous Jehoshaphat was and asked him to help fight against the nation of Syria. Jehoshaphat should have known better than to ally himself with this wicked king, but he helped Ahab anyway. God did not fight for Judah and Israel and the battle went against them. King Ahab was killed but God protected Jehoshaphat.

When Jehoshaphat returned home God sent Jehu the prophet to tell him how wrong he had been to join forces with Ahab. By becoming close friends with the wrong people you can be influenced to do wrong. God was concerned about who Jehoshaphat associated with. He wants you to choose your friends carefully, too.

Ask your dad and mom to help you make a list of the things you should look for in a friend. Read what Proverbs 13:20 says about how friends can influence you and rewrite this verse in your own words on the lines below.

Later, perhaps because of the mistake Jehoshaphat made, trouble came to Judah. Jehoshaphat received word that a huge army from the east was gathered to invade Judah. Notice how he reacted to this problem (II Chron. 20:3): “And Jehoshaphat feared, and _____ to _____ the Lord, and proclaimed a _____ throughout all Judah.”

Jehoshaphat relied on God instead of on himself or his army. Read his prayer in II Chronicles 20:5-12. This is a good example of how to pray to God when you are in trouble and need His help. God told Jehoshaphat not to be afraid—that He would fight for Judah and God always keeps His word.

The people of Judah went to battle the next day singing songs of praise to God. When they reached the enemy’s camp they found their enemies were all dead. God had caused them to kill each other! It took the people of Judah three days to carry away the riches they found among the dead bodies. Jehoshaphat learned the lesson that obedience and faith in God bring blessings and protection. He died after 25 prosperous years as king.

THE BOY KING

Joash was only seven years old when he became king of Judah. Normally the *oldest* son becomes king when his father dies. But this case was different. The story begins with Joash’s grandfather, Jehoram.

When Jehoshaphat died, his son Jehoram became king. Jehoram had married Athaliah, the idol-worshipping daughter of Ahab (king of Israel) and she influenced him to worship idols also. He did so much evil that God ended his reign in eight years. He was such a bad king, the people did not even bury him in the royal tombs as they did other kings.

Jehoram’s youngest son, Ahaziah, became the next king. All of Jehoram’s other sons had been killed as punishment because of Jehoram’s sins. Ahaziah did much evil also. He was 22 years old when he became king, but he

listened far too much to his evil mother, Athaliah. He ruled only one year.

When Ahaziah died, Athaliah was afraid she would lose power. So she killed everyone she thought might have a legal right to the throne. Then she made herself queen.

Athaliah was not trying to give the throne to the rightful heir but was *getting* power for herself. She was living the way of “get” instead of “give.” But one royal child escaped Athaliah’s awful murders. Joash was only one year old when all this was taking place. When his aunt saw that Athaliah was murdering all the royal family, she took the baby Joash and hid him. Then she smuggled him into the Temple where her father was priest.

For six years the child Joash lived hidden in the Temple. During this time his uncle Jehoiada taught him God’s ways. Jehoiada was preparing Joash to be king. When Joash was seven, Jehoiada gathered the captains of the army. He showed them Joash, the rightful heir to the throne. The people then crowned Joash and killed wicked Queen Athaliah.

Joash’s early training was good for Judah.



Murderous, self-professed Queen Athaliah dies at the hands of her subjects.

He listened to the wise advice of Jehoiada the priest and followed the way of God. Again the country prospered. But when Jehoiada died Joash no longer had any wise counsel. He listened to those who wanted to return to their former pagan ways. God was displeased and sent Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, to warn Joash to repent. But he would not listen. At Joash's order Zechariah was killed. For this sin God allowed Joash's servants to plot against him and kill him.

God will not remember the good things a person does if he becomes wicked. Turn to Ezekiel 18 and read verses 20-24. Joash had done much good for Judah but that didn't count with God after Joash became evil. A person must *continue* to do what God says is right all his life.

Amaziah, Joash's son, was the next king of Judah. He started off well but turned from God later in his life. God also allowed Amaziah to be killed for his sins.

Do You Remember?

1. Who were the first two kings over the divided nation of Israel? _____, king of the house of Judah and _____, king of the house of Israel.
2. How did God kill the huge army that threatened Jehoshaphat and Judah? _____.
3. Who was the queen who took the throne of Judah? _____.
4. How old was Joash when he began to reign? _____.

A KING IS NOT ABOVE GOD

The story of Judah's next king is found in II Chronicles 26. What was the next king's name? _____. How old was he when he began to reign? _____.

Sometimes people who are obedient to God and are being blessed for it can forget that their blessings come from God. They become puffed up and proud, thinking that *they*

brought about their prosperity. This is what happened to Uzziah.

Uzziah was just a teenager when he began to reign. He made up his mind that he was going to obey God. Verse five of II Chronicles 26 says that "... as long as he _____ the _____, God _____ him to _____." Read verses 6-15. God blessed Uzziah so greatly that he became famous for his wealth and power.

Uzziah considered his great possessions and power and began to think of himself as pretty important. He thought he could do anything he wanted. One day he tried to take over priestly duties at the Temple. He knew that only the sons of Aaron were to burn incense at the altar, but he was so big in his own eyes that he thought the rules did not apply to him. Azariah the High Priest confronted Uzziah. "Burning incense in the sanctuary is a job only for the sons of Aaron, the priests that God had ordained," he said.

But Uzziah ignored the warning. Instead of realizing that the warning was for his own good, Uzziah became angry. Suddenly a white spot appeared on his forehead. Because of his presumptuous attitude, God struck Uzziah with leprosy! From that time on until his death, he had to live apart from everyone and could not enter the Temple again.

Judah's next king was Uzziah's son, Jotham. Although he was obedient to God, he allowed the people to follow the pagan practices of the surrounding nations.

When Jotham died, his son reigned on the throne of Judah. Read II Chronicles 28 and fill in the blanks with the correct words. This king's name was _____. He did that which was _____ (right or not right) in God's sight, so God _____ (gave or removed) His special protection.

TRUSTING IN GOD SAVES JERUSALEM

The next man to rule Judah was Hezekiah. Hezekiah started his reign by destroying all the

pagan altars his father and the wicked kings before him had built. Read chapters 29-31 of II Chronicles to learn of all the changes he made.

Hezekiah worked fervently to get rid of all the pagan worship and to bring everyone back to God's way. God saw that Hezekiah was diligently trying to do what is right. For that reason God blessed him greatly.

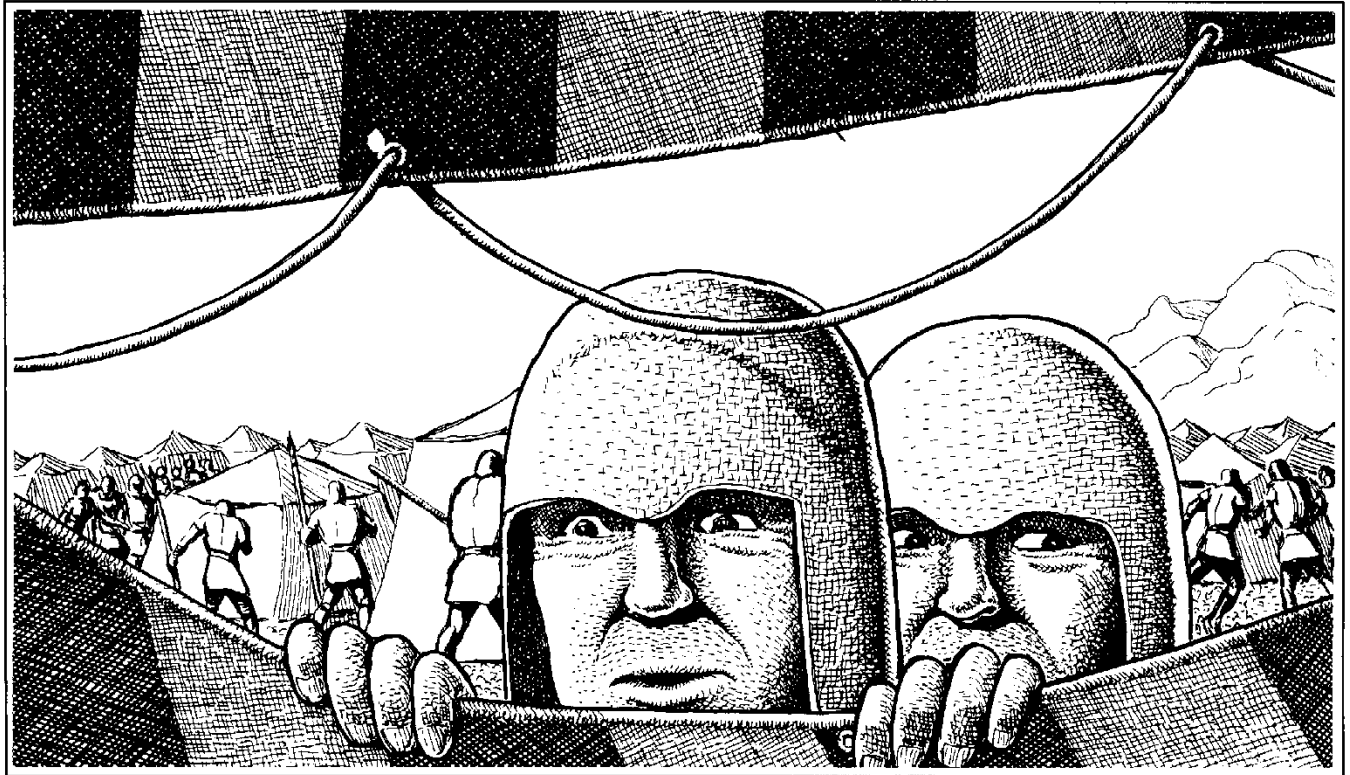
There is a lesson in Hezekiah's example for us to learn. We cannot succeed by only trying halfheartedly. Read Ecclesiastes 9:10 and write this verse on the lines below.

Decide now that you are going to be diligent in following what your parents and the ministers in God's Church teach you is right. You won't always be able to do what is right on your own, but God will help you if you trust Him and ask Him for help. God will see that you have a good attitude and are trying hard to

obey Him and He will bless you for it. The key to Hezekiah's success is found in II Chronicles 31:21: "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to _____ his _____, he did it with _____ his _____, and _____."

Hezekiah became King of Judah during the time the kingdom of Israel to the north was receiving its punishment from God at the hand of the Assyrians. In the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, the Assyrians took Israel captive and moved them out of their homeland. As Hezekiah witnessed the destruction of the nation of Israel, he grew concerned about his own kingdom. He knew the Assyrians would attack Judah next. And he was right! The Assyrian army soon surrounded Jerusalem.

Judah's army was too weak to fight the Assyrians, but Hezekiah had faith. He knew that God was able to protect them. II Kings 18:5 says that; "He _____ in the _____";



The soldiers of Judah were surprised to find thousands of dead Assyrian troops.

so that after him was _____
_____ among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.”

“Don’t be afraid,” Hezekiah told the people. “The Assyrian army is only flesh and blood but we have the Almighty God on our side!”

VICTORY WITHOUT BATTLE

II Kings, chapters 18 and 19 tell the story of the Assyrians’ attempt to take Jerusalem. The Assyrians stood outside the city walls and began to mock God openly so all the people on the city wall could hear. They said that Hezekiah’s God was no better than the pagan gods of other nations.

Then the king of Assyria sent a letter to Hezekiah mocking him for trusting in God. When Hezekiah read the letter he spread it before God and prayed. He asked God to show the Assyrians that He was the true God who had all power. Read Hezekiah’s prayer in II Kings 19:14-19. It is a beautiful example of sincere, heartfelt prayer to God.

God comforted Hezekiah and saved Judah. He sent an angel into the camp of the Assyrians while they slept and killed 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers. When those who were still alive woke up, they saw all the dead bodies and fled for their lives!

A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Soon afterward Hezekiah became so ill that he was near death. Isaiah came to Hezekiah with a message from God. “Set your house in order, Hezekiah, because you are going to die soon,” he told the king. Hezekiah was stunned by the words of the prophet. He did not want to die yet. So Hezekiah prayed fervently to God, asking Him to change His mind.

Have you ever asked your parents to change their minds about something? Your parents love you and they know your needs. If they see your attitude and behavior is right, often they will change a decision they have made regarding you.

God the Father in heaven heard Hezekiah’s

heartfelt prayer just as your parents hear you. Before Isaiah left the King’s house, God said, “Isaiah, go back to Hezekiah, I have changed my mind.” Isaiah relayed God’s message to the King saying, “God will heal you in three days and add 15 years to your life.” The King was overjoyed, but he asked Isaiah for a sign so he could really know this would happen. Read II Kings 20:8-11 and write down the miracle God performed as a sign to the King. _____

Isaiah told the King’s servants to make a poultice of figs to draw out poisons from the King’s body. In three days, Hezekiah was healed and God did add 15 years to Hezekiah’s life. Because Hezekiah served God, the country prospered while he lived.

Do You Remember?

1. Why did Uzziah become leprous? _____

2. What did Hezekiah do when he started to rule that pleased God so much? (II Kings 18:4) _____

3. Which army surrounded Jerusalem after conquering Israel? _____
4. How many years were added to Hezekiah’s life by God after his illness? _____

THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND

Josiah was only eight years old when he became the next king of Judah. Under the evil reign of the two kings (Manasseh and Amon) who ruled before Josiah, the people had forgotten God’s laws. But Josiah made up his mind to obey God. II Chronicles 34:3 says that because while he was “_____”, he began to _____
_____”

Josiah outlawed all the idols and pagan altars which the wicked kings before him had made. He put his whole heart into his job. He

even burned the bones of the false prophets who had served pagan gods.

When Josiah was 26 years old he began to restore the Temple. God's house had not been taken care of and needed many repairs. While repairing the Temple, the high priest found the Book of the Law. This book was the law as given by God through Moses. It contained the first five books of the Bible we have today. List the first five books: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

The books you have written down are also called the Pentateuch. These books reveal God's laws and His instructions for following Him. Josiah was happy to have found the book and was eager to practice what God taught.

When the book of the Law was read to Josiah, he realized how far away from God the country had gone. He was very upset. He knew all Israel had sinned, and he was afraid of the punishment God would send. Read II Chronicles 34:21 and fill in the blanks. "Go, enquire of the _____ for me, and for them that are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the _____ of the _____ that is found: for great is the _____ of the _____ that is poured out upon us, because our _____ have _____ of the _____, to do after all that is written in this _____."

God sent word to Josiah that Judah would go into captivity because of their disobedience as was prophesied in the Book of the Law (Lev. 26, Deut. 28). But because Josiah was so diligent in trying to serve God, the punishment would come *after* Josiah's death.

Josiah and all of Judah had not been keeping God's Festivals because they did not know about them. When the priest read God's instructions, Josiah immediately ordered Judah to keep them. While the people obeyed God's laws, they enjoyed the blessings and happiness that come from following God's way of life.

Nevertheless, the time was coming when God would remove Judah from the land because of past sins (II Kings 23:26-27).

JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE

After Josiah's death Judah returned to its evil ways. It was time for God to bring the punishment He had promised to send because of Judah's almost constant disobedience to His laws.

God chose Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire, to conquer the kingdom of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, broke down the walls, and destroyed the city. He destroyed the Temple Solomon had built. Then the Babylonians carried the Jews captive to Babylon. They were captives for 70 years—until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

OVERVIEW

The united kingdom of Israel lasted 120 years and was ruled by Saul, David and then Solomon. From the time the kingdom divided into the house of Judah and the house of Israel, it was 250 years until the house of Israel went into captivity and nearly 400 years until the house of Judah went into captivity.

You may wonder why everyone knows who the Jews are today but almost no one knows who or where the descendants of the other tribes of Israel have settled. The ten tribes of Israel lost their identity because they gave up keeping God's Sabbath, the sign that identified them as God's chosen people. Remember, it was Assyria that took Israel captive. It was Assyria's policy to remove all memory of past freedom from people they conquered. They gave Israel a new land, new culture and new language.

The apostles in Christ's time knew who and where the Israelites were even though they weren't identified as Israelites on Roman maps of the time. Christ sent the original 12 apostles to preach to the house of Israel in their various countries. But in the next two thousand years their identity was totally lost. They became the

“lost tribes” of the house of Israel.

Ask your parents to read to you Mr. Herbert Armstrong’s book, *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. It explains who the lost tribes of the house of Israel are today. After reading it, write a short book report on it. If your parents do not have the book just write to: Herbert W. Armstrong, P. O. Box 111, Pasadena, Ca. 91123.

The Babylonians, who conquered Judah, did not try to take away the identity of the Jews, even though they did remove them from their homeland. The Jews kept their culture, language and laws. After 70 years Cyrus, King of Persia, allowed them to return to their homeland. Today the Jews are scattered all over the earth, but many live in the modern state of Israel. Their native tongue, Hebrew, is still spoken in that nation.

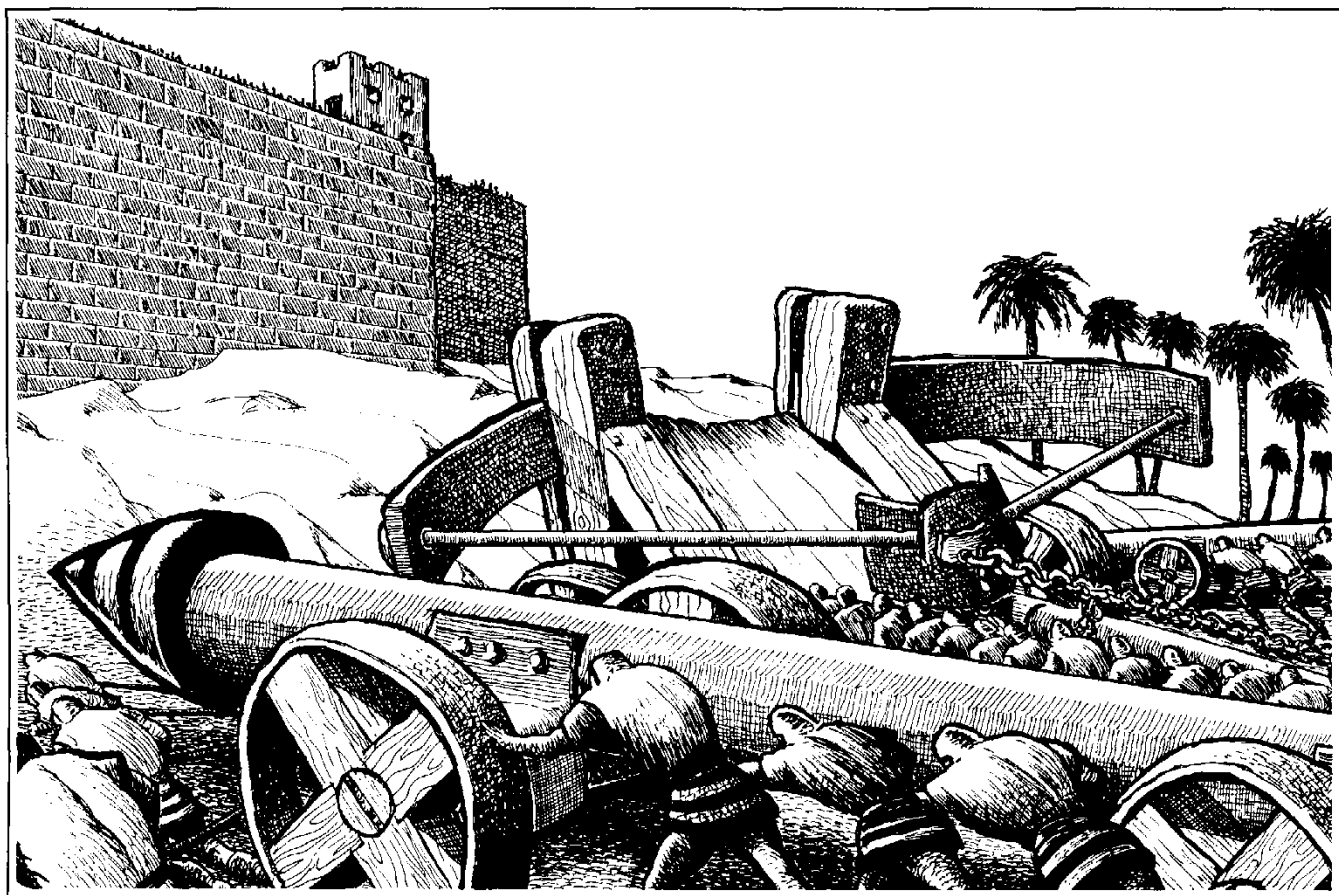
Both Israel and Judah had the opportunity

of following God’s law and being blessed for it. God wanted them to be an example for other nations. But instead of setting a good example of obedience to God they followed the pagan ways of other nations.

God wants you to follow His laws and be an example to your friends. The two young kings of Judah showed that you can follow God even as a youth. Do you remember who they were? They were _____ and _____.

God is pleased with you when you strive to obey His laws and honor your father and your mother. He has some very responsible positions in store for those who learn and practice all His commandments.

In our next lesson we will cover the exciting story of a young man named Daniel. He followed God’s laws, even in captivity. We will see from his example that it always pays to follow God’s law.



The Babylonian army moves against Jerusalem with huge catapults and battering rams.

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BIBLE MEMORY

Psalm 1:1-6

UNSCRAMBLE AND MATCH

Unscramble the words in the left hand column, then draw a line to match them with the proper clue in the right hand column.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. SAA ____ | UZZIAH |
| 2. LABA _____ | GOD ADDED 15 YEARS |
| 3. HABA _____ | DESTROYED GRANDMOTHER'S IDOL |
| 4. VIDDA _____ | BUILT BY SOLOMON |
| 5. HAJOS _____ | FATHER OF ATHALIAH |
| 6. PREEL _____ | FALSE GOD |
| 7. AJOHSI _____ | KING AFTER SAUL |
| 8. PLEMET _____ | DAVID'S SON |
| 9. MOONLOS _____ | HIS SERVANT FOUND BOOK OF LAW |
| 10. ZEHAHEKI _____ | KING AT SEVEN |