

David & Goliath



All About Angels – Volume 3

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Elijah & Elisha

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Chapter 11: David And Solomon

There are not a lot of references to angelic activity during the period of the kings in Israel. Rather than direct angelic visitations the Lord seemed to work through the Holy Spirit imparting his word to his seers or prophets. What references there are though show us that the angels were active throughout the entire period, even if they are not always specifically mentioned. They have always been at work behind the scenes rescuing Israel and Judah from their enemies. There are also references to evil spirits, mediums and false prophets during this time period, making it apparent that Satan's angels and demons were active also. In reality, almost nothing has changed since the day Adam and Eve sinned. The angels of God and the angels of Satan are both active invisibly intervening in the affairs of men.

(Eph 6:12 KJV) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Samuel Is Called By God

(1 Sam 3:1 NIV) The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

(1 Sam 3:2-7 NIV) One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

(1 Sam 3:8-10 NIV) The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The LORD came and stood there,

calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

(1 Sam 3:11-14 NIV) And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family--from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

(1 Sam 3:15-18 NIV) Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

(1 Sam 3:19-21 NIV) The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD. The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

(1 Sam 4:1 NIV) And Samuel's word came to all Israel.

(1 Sam 7:15-17 NIV) Samuel continued as judge over Israel all the days of his life. From year to year he went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all those places. But he always went back to Ramah, where his home was, and there he also judged Israel. And he built an altar there to the LORD.

(1 Sam 8:1-3 NIV) When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

Israel Desires a King

(1 Sam 8:4-5 NIV) So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

(1 Sam 8:6-9 NIV) But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

(1 Sam 8:10-18 NIV) Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your menservants and maidservants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, and the LORD will not answer you in that day."

(1 Sam 8:19-22 NIV) But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. The LORD answered, "Listen to them and give them a king." Then Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Everyone go back to his town."

Saul Becomes Israel's First King

(1 Sam 9:1-2 NIV) There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose

name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites--a head taller than any of the others.

(1 Sam 9:3 NIV) Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys."

(1 Sam 9:5-6 & 9 NIV) When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, "Come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us." But the servant replied, "Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let's go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take." (Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)

(1 Sam 9:14-19 NIV) They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place. Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me." When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people." Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, "Would you please tell me where the seer's house is?" "I am the seer," Samuel replied. "Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.

(1 Sam 9:25-27 NIV) After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. They rose about daybreak and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Get ready, and I will send you on your way." When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us"--and the servant did so--" but you stay here awhile, so that I may give you a message from God."

(1 Sam 10:1-7 NIV) Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance? When you leave me today, you will meet two men near

Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?"' "Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them. "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

(1 Sam 10:8-11 NIV) "Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do." As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying. When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

(1 Sam 10:17 NIV) Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah

(1 Sam 10:24-25 NIV) Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!" Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people, each to his own home.

(1 Sam 12:1-5 NIV) Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you. Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day. Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I

oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right." "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand." Samuel said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." "He is witness," they said.

(1 Sam 13:1 NIV) Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.

Saul Refuses To Follow Gods Commands

(1 Sam 15:10-12 NIV) Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

(1 Sam 15:13-15 NIV) When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the Lord's instructions." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?" Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

(1 Sam 15:16-19 NIV) "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied. Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.' Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

(1 Sam 15:20-21 NIV) "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

(1 Sam 15:22-23 NIV) But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

David Is Chosen By God To Be Israel's Second King

(1 Sam 16:1 NIV) The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

(1 Sam 16:6-7 NIV) When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

(1 Sam 16:10-13 NIV) Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

An Evil Spirit Torments Saul

(1 Sam 16:14-23 NIV) Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better." So Saul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me." One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is

with him." Then Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Saul. David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him." Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Saul Is Jealous Of David Because God's Blessing Is upon David

(1 Sam 18:9-16 NIV) And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice. Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns. Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him. But an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the harp, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.

The Death Of Samuel

(1 Sam 25:1 NIV) Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Maon.

Saul Fears The Philistines: The Lord Refuses To Answer

(1 Sam 28:3-6 NIV) Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in his own town of Ramah. Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from the land. The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set

up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets.

Saul Consults A Medium (A Necromancer)

Nec-ro-man-cy 1. The practice of supposedly communicating with the spirits of the dead in order to predict the future. 2. Black magic; sorcery. 3. Magic qualities. Source: Bible Dictionary

(1 Sam 28:7-11 NIV) Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said. So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name." But the woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?" Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this." Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" "Bring up Samuel," he said.

(1 Sam 28:12-14 NIV) When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!" The king said to her, "Don't be afraid. What do you see?" The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground." "What does he look like?" he asked. "An old man wearing a robe is coming up," she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.

(1 Sam 28:15-19 NIV) Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" "I am in great distress," Saul said. "The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do." Samuel said, "Why do you consult me, now that the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done what he predicted through me. The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors--to David. Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today. The LORD will hand over both Israel and you to the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also hand over the army of Israel to the Philistines."

(1 Sam 28:20 NIV) Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of Samuel's words. His strength was gone, for he had eaten nothing all that day and night.

(1 Sam 31:1-6 NIV) Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.

David Officially Becomes King

(2 Sam 5:2-5 NIV) In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler." When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

(2 Sam 5:6-7 NIV) The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off." They thought, "David cannot get in here." Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.

(2 Sam 5:9-12 NIV) David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the supporting terraces inward. And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him. Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David. And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

(2 Sam 7:9 & 12-16 NIV) I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me ; your throne will be established forever."

The House of David, meaning David's descendants will never lack for someone to be ruling and reigning over the children of Israel forever. Even today, somewhere, perhaps even in the United States, a descendant of David is ruling over a country that has Jews and Israelites living in it. This will continue until the return of Jesus Christ when he will be the descendant of David on a throne for all eternity. What a promise God gave David.

(Psa 89:20-28 NIV) I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him. My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him. No enemy will subject him to tribute; no wicked man will oppress him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries. My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn will be exalted. I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers. He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.' I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail.

(Psa 89:29-37 NIV) I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. "If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness--and I will not lie to David--that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky." Selah

As long as the sun comes up every morning and the moon is in the sky one

of David's descendants is ruling over Jews and Israelites somewhere in the world. This is God's unbreakable promise to David. That is as true today as it was thousands of years ago when David himself was on his throne.

David's son Solomon had 1000 wives and mistresses from all nations, and had children by most of them. Many of those wives and children moved back to their home countries after the death of Solomon and his harem was disbanded. It is possible that the leaders of many countries today are being ruled by descendants of David. There could be African descendants of David, Chinese descendants of David, Russian descendants of David, and actually any country in the world could have a descendant of David ruling over it. And, since the Jews are scattered throughout the world into almost every nation in each place that a descendant of David is ruling God's word is fulfilled again. Of course, the ultimate fulfillment will be Jesus Christ ruling the universe from Jerusalem.

(2 Sam 7:17 NIV) Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

(2 Sam 7:18-29 NIV) Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD? "What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Sovereign LORD. For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant. "How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel--the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, O LORD, have become their God. "And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you. "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, 'I will build a house for you.' So your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer. O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your

servant. Now be pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever in your sight; for you, O Sovereign LORD, have spoken, and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever."

David Takes a Census Of His Fighting Men

(1 Chr 21:1-4 NCV) Satan was against Israel, and he caused David to count the people of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, "Go and count all the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan. Then tell me so I will know how many there are." But Joab said, "May the LORD give the nation a hundred times more people. My master the king, all the Israelites are your servants. Why do you want to do this, my master? You will make Israel guilty of sin." But the king commanded Joab, so Joab left and went through all Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

David became puffed up with pride after the Lord had given him such great and wonderful promises and victory over all of his enemies. David's sin was because of the reason for his taking a census. He wanted to glory in the might and strength of his army and he was forgetting that it was God who had given him all of his victories albeit through his fighting men.

(Psa 33:12 NIV) Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.

(Psa 33:16-17 NIV) No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.

(Psa 33:18-19 NIV) But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

(Psa 34:7 NIV) The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

(Psa 35:5-6 NIV) May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

(Psa 68:17 NIV) The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.

Even the great David, the man after God's own heart, who wrote many of the Psalms about God's deliverance for his people through the angels, was susceptible to the sin of pride, the same sin that caused Satan to fall and still afflicts all of us humans today.

(1 Chr 21:5 NCV) Joab gave the list of the people to David. There were one million one hundred thousand men in all of Israel who could use the sword, and there were four hundred seventy thousand men in Judah who could use the sword.

(2 Sam 24:10 NCV) David felt ashamed after he had counted the people. He said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly by what I have done. LORD, I beg you to forgive me, your servant, because I have been very foolish."

(1 Chr 21:9-12 NCV) The LORD said to Gad, who was David's seer, "Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: I offer you three choices. Choose one of them and I will do it.'" So Gad went to David and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Choose for yourself three years of hunger. Or choose three months of running from your enemies as they chase you with their swords. Or choose three days of punishment from the LORD, in which a terrible disease will spread through the country. The angel of the LORD will go through Israel destroying the people.' Now, David, decide which of these things I should tell the LORD who sent me."

(1 Chr 21:13-14 NCV) David said to Gad, "I am in great trouble. Let the LORD punish me, because the LORD is very merciful. Don't let my punishment come from human beings." So the LORD sent a terrible disease on Israel, and seventy thousand people died.

The Angel Stops The Destruction At The Site The Temple Was To Be Built

(2 Sam 24:16 NCV) When the angel raised his arm toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD felt very sorry about the terrible things that had happened. He said to the angel who was destroying the people, "That is enough! Put down your arm!" The angel of the LORD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

(1 Chr 21:15 NCV) God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem, but when the angel started to destroy it, the LORD saw it and felt very sorry about the terrible things that had happened. So he said to the angel who was destroying, "That is enough! Put down your arm!" The angel of the LORD

was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

(2 Sam 24:17 NCV) When David saw the angel that killed the people, he said to the LORD, "I am the one who sinned and did wrong. These people only followed me like sheep. They did nothing wrong. Please punish me and my family."

(1 Chr 21:16-17 NCV) David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD in the sky, holding his sword drawn and pointed at Jerusalem. Then David and the older leaders bowed facedown on the ground. They were wearing rough cloth to show their grief. David said to God, "I am the one who sinned and did wrong. I gave the order for the people to be counted. These people only followed me like sheep. They did nothing wrong. LORD my God, please punish me and my family, but stop the terrible disease that is killing your people."

(1 Chr 21:18 NCV) Then the angel of the LORD told Gad to tell David that he should build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

(2 Sam 24:18-19 NCV) That day Gad came to David and said, "Go and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David did what Gad told him to do, just as the LORD commanded.

(1 Chr 21:19-25 NCV) So David did what Gad told him to do, in the name of the LORD. Araunah was separating the wheat from the straw. When he turned around, he saw the angel. Araunah's four sons who were with him hid. David came to Araunah, and when Araunah saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed facedown on the ground before David. David said to him, "Sell me your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD here. Then the terrible disease will stop. Sell it to me for the full price." Araunah said to David, "Take this threshing floor. My master the king, do anything you want. Look, I will also give you oxen for the whole burnt offerings, the threshing boards for the wood, and wheat for the grain offering. I give everything to you." But King David answered Araunah, "No, I will pay the full price for the land. I won't take anything that is yours and give it to the LORD. I won't offer a burnt offering that costs me nothing." So David paid Araunah about fifteen pounds of gold for the place.

(1 Chr 21:26-27 NCV) David built an altar to the LORD there and offered whole burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. David prayed to the LORD, and he answered him by sending down fire from heaven on the altar of

burnt offering. Then the LORD commanded the angel to put his sword back into its holder.

(1 Chr 21:28 NCV) When David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah, he offered sacrifices there.

(1 Chr 21:29-30 NCV) The Holy Tent that Moses made while the Israelites were in the desert and the altar of burnt offerings were in Gibeon at the place of worship. But David could not go to the Holy Tent to speak with God, because he was afraid of the angel of the LORD and his sword.

(1 Chr 22:1 NCV) David said, "The Temple of the LORD God and the altar for Israel's burnt offerings will be built here."

David, By God's Command, Chooses Solomon To Succeed Him And Build The Temple

(1 Chr 28:1-8 NIV) David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem: the officers over the tribes, the commanders of the divisions in the service of the king, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the brave warriors. King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.' "Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. Of all my sons--and the LORD has given me many--he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. He said to me: 'Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time.' "So now I charge you in the sight of all Israel and of the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God: Be careful to follow all the commands of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever.

(1 Chr 28:9-10 NIV) "And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of

your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work."

(1 Chr 28:20-21 NIV) David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished. The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command."

(1 Chr 29:1-5 NIV) Then King David said to the whole assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the LORD God. With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God--gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble--all of these in large quantities. Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?"

(1 Chr 29:6-9 NIV) Then the leaders of families, the officers of the tribes of Israel, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, and the officials in charge of the king's work gave willingly. They gave toward the work on the temple of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze and a hundred thousand talents of iron. Any who had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the temple of the LORD in the custody of Jehiel the Gershonite. The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.

(1 Chr 29:10-14 NIV) David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father

Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

David's Last Words

(2 Sam 23:1-6 NIV) These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs : "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth.' "Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?

(1 Chr 29:26-28 NIV) David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. He ruled over Israel forty years--seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.

Solomon Becomes King

(1 Chr 29:23-25 NIV) So Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of his father David. He prospered and all Israel obeyed him. All the officers and mighty men, as well as all of King David's sons, pledged their submission to King Solomon. The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before.

(1 Ki 3:3 NIV) Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

Solomon Asks For Wisdom

(2 Chr 1:1-4 NIV) Solomon son of David established himself firmly over his kingdom, for the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great. Then Solomon spoke to all Israel--to the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, to the judges and to all the leaders in Israel, the heads of families--and Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon, for God's Tent of Meeting was there, which Moses the Lord's servant had made in the desert. Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

(2 Chr 1:7-12 NIV) That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, riches or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, riches and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."

According to legend the angel Raphael came to Solomon and gave him "The Book of the Angel Raziel", which enabled him to learn the incredible wisdom and knowledge ascribed to him in the scriptures. The Archangel Raziel is known as the angel of the secret regions and chief of the Supreme Mysteries. Raziel means ("secret of God.") In the Kabbalah, Raziel is the personification of divine wisdom.

Raziel is the legendary author of The Book of the Angel Raziel that contains all celestial and earthly knowledge. Legend has it that the angel Raziel handed his book of knowledge to Adam and Eve after they fell into sin to help them survive in the world. In this book was the explanation of all of creation, and of how to build and create things on the Earth. It is said that many of the great ancient prophets learned from the archangel Raziel, including Abraham & Sarah, Rachel, Noah, Solomon, Elijah, and many more. While this is all just legend and not backed by scripture it certainly would not be surprising if angels were involved in giving Solomon the great

wisdom he needed to build the temple and rule with wisdom and justice as God promised him.

God Gives Solomon The Wisdom He Prayed For

(1 Ki 3:10-14 NIV) The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for--both riches and honor--so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."

(1 Ki 4:20 & 25 NIV) The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.

(1 Ki 4:30-34 NIV) Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezrahite--wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

Solomon in the writings of wisdom which we have preserved in the bible makes only one reference to angels.

(Eccl 5:6 KJV) Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

Solomon Builds The Temple

(1 Ki 6:11-14 NIV) The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations

and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel." So Solomon built the temple and completed it.

Cherubims Adorn The Temple

(1 Ki 6:19 NIV) He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there.

(1 Ki 6:20-29 NIV) The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary. In the inner sanctuary he made a pair of cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits--ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. The height of each cherub was ten cubits. He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. He overlaid the cherubim with gold. On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers.

(1 Ki 6:34-35 NIV) He also made two pine doors, each having two leaves that turned in sockets. He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.

(1 Ki 7:36 NIV) He engraved cherubim, lions and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, in every available space, with wreaths all around.

(2 Chr 3:10-14 NIV) In the Most Holy Place he made a pair of sculptured cherubim and overlaid them with gold. The total wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long and touched the temple wall, while its other wing, also five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub. Similarly one wing of the second cherub was five cubits long and touched the other temple wall, and its other wing, also

five cubits long, touched the wing of the first cherub. The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. They stood on their feet, facing the main hall. He made the curtain of blue, purple and crimson yarn and fine linen, with cherubim worked into it.

The Temple Is Completed

(1 Ki 6:38 NIV) In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.

(1 Ki 7:51 NIV) When all the work King Solomon had done for the temple of the LORD was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated--the silver and gold and the furnishings--and he placed them in the treasuries of the Lord's temple.

(1 Ki 8:1 NIV) Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the Lord's covenant from Zion, the City of David.

(1 Ki 8:2 NIV) All the men of Israel came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month.

The Ark Resides Under The Wings Of The Cherubim

God gave the instructions for building the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle to Moses and the both included Cherubim designs. David received from God the plans for the Temple which he passed on to Solomon and likewise, the Temple included many likenesses of cherubim and the Ark itself with its Cherubim was positioned under the Cherubim in the Temple.

(1 Chr 28:11-13 NIV) Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. He gave him instructions for the divisions of the priests and Levites, and for all the work of serving in the temple of the LORD, as well as for all the articles to be used in its service.

(1 Chr 28:19 NIV) "All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan."

This shows how important it is to God that we humans understand how important are the angels to the service of God in heaven and on earth. God could have chose from anything in his creation to decorate his temple. He could have chose the sun, the moon, the stars, or even a likeness or design representing Himself, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. But, he chose none of those things, but chose a likeness of His created heavenly beings, his servants, the angels.

I believe he did this to show how involved the angels are in our lives and in answering prayer. God promised the Israelites he would answer their prayers when they repented and prayed in the direction of the temple. The temple represents the throne of God in heaven and the cherubim adorning it represent his servants, the angels who answer our prayers in accordance with the commands of God who sends them on their missions of mercy or destruction through the administration of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

(Rom 15:4 NIV) For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Everything in the bible is for our example and our learning. God wants us to understand how his kingdom operated so we are more effective in our Christian walk and our prayer life. We do not pray to the angels, but we can pray to God to permit the angel assigned to us as individuals to be allowed to help us with whatever we need.

(Mat 26:53 NIV) Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Remember, even Jesus as he was being arrested did not tell his disciples "I can destroy these people arresting me with my power if I so choose." Instead he said, "Do you not think that even now I cannot call 12 legions of angels...."

(1 Ki 8:6-7 NIV) The priests then brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles.

(1 Ki 8:9 NIV) There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

(1 Ki 8:10-11 NIV) When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.

(2 Chr 5:5-8 NIV) and they brought up the ark and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests, who were Levites, carried them up; and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. The priests then brought the ark of the Lord's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and covered the ark and its carrying poles.

(2 Chr 5:10 NIV) There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

The Dedication Of The Temple

(2 Chr 5:11-13 NIV) The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians--Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives--stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud,

(2 Chr 5:14 NIV) and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.

Solomons Prayer

(1 Ki 8:14-15 NCV) While all the Israelites were standing there, King

Solomon turned to them and blessed them. Then he said, "Praise the LORD, the God of Israel. He has done what he promised to my father David. The LORD said,

(1 Ki 8:22-24 NCV) Then Solomon stood facing the Lord's altar, and all the Israelites were standing behind him. He spread out his hands toward the sky and said: "LORD, God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth below. You keep your agreement of love with your servants who truly follow you. You have kept the promise you made to your servant David, my father. You spoke it with your own mouth and finished it with your hands today.

(1 Ki 8:28-29 NCV) But please listen to my prayer and my request, because I am your servant. LORD my God, hear this prayer your servant prays to you today. Night and day please watch over this Temple where you have said, 'I will be worshiped there.' Hear the prayer I pray facing this Temple.

(1 Ki 8:35-39 NCV) "When they sin against you, you will stop the rain from falling on their land. Then they will pray, facing this place and praising you; they will stop sinning when you make them suffer. When this happens, please hear their prayer in heaven, and forgive the sins of your servants, the Israelites. Teach them to do what is right. Then please send rain to this land you have given particularly to them. "At times the land will become so dry that no food will grow, or a great sickness will spread among the people. Sometimes all the crops will be destroyed by locusts or grasshoppers. Your people will be attacked in their cities by their enemy or will become sick. When any of these things happen, the people will become truly sorry. If your people spread their hands in prayer toward this Temple, then hear their prayers from your home in heaven. Forgive and treat each person as he should be treated because you know what is in a person's heart. Only you know what is in everyone's heart.

(1 Ki 8:54 NCV) Solomon prayed this prayer to the LORD, kneeling in front of the altar with his arms raised toward heaven. When he finished praying, he got up.

(1 Ki 9:2-3 NCV) Then the LORD appeared to him again just as he had done before, in Gibeon. The LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and what you have asked me to do. You built this Temple, and I have made it a holy place. I will be worshiped there forever and will watch over it and protect it always.

(1 Ki 10:25-27 NIV) Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift--articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules. Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills.

(2 Chr 9:26 NIV) He ruled over all the kings from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.

Solomon Led Astray By His Desire For Heathen Women

(1 Ki 11:1-14 NIV) King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter--Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

(1 Ki 11:9-10 NIV) The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command.

Solomon's Kingdom Is Reduced Due To His Sin

(1 Ki 11:11-13 NIV) So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Although God was angry with Solomon he could not break his promise to David that there would always be a descendant of his ruling over the

people of Israel. So God took away the leadership of ten of the tribes of Israel from Solomon's son when he succeeded his father, but left him with Judah, (David's Tribe) and Benjamin and also some of the descendants of Aaron (the priests) and some of the Levites who took care of the Temple duties.

(2 Chr 9:30-31 NIV) Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.

Chapter 12: Elijah, Elisha and the Kings

(1 Ki 11:42-43 NIV) Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.

The Kingdom David United Is Split Again Into Two Nations

King David united Judah and Israel under one kingship. It only lasted two generations though, his own and the reign of his son Solomon. Because of Solomon's sins of worshipping Idols to please his foreign wives God once again split the kingdom leaving Solomon's son Rehoboam only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and some priests and Levites for Rehoboam to rule over.

This was enough for Gods promise to be kept, that David would never lack for a descendant on a throne ruling over some Israelites. As stated earlier, somewhere in the world there will always be a descendant of King David ruling over some Israelites until the return of Christ and then He (Christ) will rule forever over Israel and the universe.

(1 Ki 9:5 NCV) ... This is the promise I made to your father David--that someone from his family would always rule Israel.

The reason for explaining this promise so thoroughly even though the promises of God are not the main topic of this study, is to avoid confusion as we look at the involvement of angels in protecting both the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. God sent prophets to each of them and sometimes divine protection and at other times divine judgment until their sin grieved him so much he removed them from his sight.

As we study angels in the times of the kings keep it clear in your mind whether the angels were protecting Israel or Judah. Your understanding of the bible will be much enhanced by knowing the difference between these two nations. Everything in scripture, even the in the New Testament and in prophecy is so much more clear when one understands the difference between the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah, who later became known as the Jews, and still are known as the Jews to this day.

The Kingdom Splits Under Solomon's Son Rehoboam

(1 Ki 12:1-5 NIV) Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had

gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." Rehoboam answered, "Go away for three days and then come back to me." So the people went away.

(1 Ki 12:6-11 NIV) Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked. They replied, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. He asked them, "What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?" The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell these people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'--tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.'"

(2 Chr 10:15 NIV) So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from God, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

(1 Ki 12:12-19 NIV) Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, "Come back to me in three days." The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite. When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: "What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!" So the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to

this day.

Notice in the verses above that King Rehoboam, descendant of King David, still ruled over some Israelites who were living in the kingdom of Judah and did not choose to move out of Judah and into Israel when the kingdom split.

The split between Judah and Israel is similar to the split that occurred when the south seceded from the north in the United States before the start of the civil war. The breach in the United States however was eventually healed, but the split between Israel and Judah will not be healed until Jesus Christ returns.

An important fact to note in all of this is how faithful God is in keeping his promises. We can rely on every promise that God gives to us as Christians in the bible. God cannot lie and he will keep his word to us somehow, even if it is not exactly in the way we would expect. That is the real lesson here, that God is always faithful to his word.

(1 Ki 12:20-24 NIV) When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David. When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered the whole house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin--a hundred and eighty thousand fighting men--to make war against the house of Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam son of Solomon. But this word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah, to the whole house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.'" So they obeyed the word of the LORD and went home again, as the LORD had ordered.

Israel Under Jeroboam Reverts To Idol Worship

(1 Ki 12:25-33 NIV) Then Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built up Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam." After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods,

O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.

(1 Ki 13:1-6 NIV) By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'" That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out." When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD. Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.

(1 Ki 13:7-9 NIV) The king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift." But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.'" So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.

A Prophet Lies About Seeing An Angel

(1 Ki 13:10-17 NIV) Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that

day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. So he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it and rode after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" "I am," he replied. So the prophet said to him, "Come home with me and eat." The man of God said, "I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.'"

In the verse below a prophet of the Lord lies to another prophet of the Lord about seeing an angel and receiving a word from the Lord from the angel. Let this be a warning, not everyone who claims to have seen an angel and received a word from them is telling the truth. Check everything against the scriptures and against your own prayer to the Lord about the matter before proceeding on the say so of someone else. The cost could be your life for not doing so, as it was in this case.

Another lesson from the verses below is that even saved people can lie to one another. Don't just accept everyone's word because they claim to be a Christian, you could get burned. People lie for many reasons. We are not told why the old prophet lied. Perhaps he just wanted some company. Perhaps the prophet who went to the king was quite famous in the land and the old prophet wanted the honor of eating with him to brag about it to his friends and family. We don't know why he lied about seeing an angel, but we know he did. Therefore, be careful to consult the Lord in all of your dealings, whether with other Christians or with non Christians. God doesn't lie, but humans do.

(1 Ki 13:18-22 NIV) The old prophet answered, "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" (But he was lying to him.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house. While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.'"

(1 Ki 13:23-32 NIV) When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. Some people who passed by saw the body thrown down there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived. When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, "It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him." The prophet said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me," and they did so. Then he went out and found the body thrown down on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, "Oh, my brother!" After burying him, he said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the message he declared by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true."

(1 Ki 13:33-34 NIV) Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

Asa King Of Judah Delivered From A Hostile Army

(2 Chr 14:9-15 NIV) Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the LORD and his forces. The men of Judah

carried off a large amount of plunder. They destroyed all the villages around Gerar, for the terror of the LORD had fallen upon them. They plundered all these villages, since there was much booty there. They also attacked the camps of the herdsmen and carried off droves of sheep and goats and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

God no doubt sent an angel to assist Asa in routing the Cushites. Most of the time when it says in scripture "The Lord did such and so" in reference to the destruction of a city or the defeat of an army, He (The Lord) accomplished it through his angels. Sodom and Gommorrah give us the example when it says "The Lord overthrew the cities of the plain" but in the detailed account of the escape of Lot and his family from Sodom we are told that the angels actually did the destroying by the command of God.

(Deu 29:23 KJV) And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

(Gen 19:21-22 NCV) The angel said to Lot, "Very well, I will allow you to do this also. I will not destroy that town. But run there fast, because I cannot destroy Sodom until you are safely in that town." (That town is named Zoar, because it is little.)

Keep this in mind as you study the bible and read about the miraculous deliverance's of God's people, most of which are accomplished through his angels.

(2 Chr 15:1-7 NIV) The Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them. In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress. But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded."

(2 Chr 16:6-14 NIV) Then King Asa brought all the men of Judah, and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using.

With them he built up Geba and Mizpah. At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people. The events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his fathers. They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honor.

(2 Chr 17:1 NIV) Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel.

King Ahab And Elijah

We skip ahead now in Israel's history (the Northern kingdom) to the time of their seventh king, Ahab. Below is a description of Ahab from the bible dictionary.

Ahab: Personal name meaning, "father's brother." The seventh king of Israel's Northern Kingdom, married a foreigner, Jezebel, and incited God's anger more than any of Israel's previous kings. Ahab, was the son and successor of Omri. His 22-year reign (874-853 B.C.), while enjoying some political and military success, was marred by spiritual compromise and failure (1 Kings 16:30).

His wife, Jezebel, was the daughter of Ethbaal, priest-king of Tyre (1 Kings 16:31). She was a devotee to the Tyrian god Melqart and gave open endorsement to the worship of Baal in Israel by supporting 450 Baal prophets and 400 prophets of the goddess Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). Following Ahab's death, she continued to be a significant force in Israel for ten years as queen mother.

Ahab was successful in two major campaigns against the Syrian king, Benhadad, but was mortally wounded in the third. His participation in the great battle of Qarqar (853 B.C.), though not mentioned in the Bible, is recorded on an inscription of Shalmanezar III of Assyria. According to Shalmanezar, Ahab committed 2,000 chariots and 10,000 men to the battle.

The days of Ahab in Samaria were days of growing wealth and spiritual apostasy. According to 1 Kings 22:39, he built an "ivory house" for Jezebel, the remains of which were discovered in the Harvard excavations at the site. Rooms and furniture were decorated with ivory inlay which in many cases featured Egyptian deities. His surrender to the influences of idolatry is illustrated by the construction of a temple for Baal (1 Kings 16:32), the massacre of the Lord's prophets (1 Kings 18:4,19), and seizure of an Israelite's property (1 Kings 21).

Ahab appears to have been a worshiper of Yahweh, God of Israel, but probably along with other deities. He frequently consulted with Yahweh's prophets (1 Kings 20:13-14,22,28; 22:8,16), used the divine name in naming his children (Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Athaliah) and did not interfere with the execution of the priests of Baal after the contest on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:40). The influence of Jezebel in his life, however, overshadowed any significant influence the prophets of the Lord had in his life. He became a prime example of evil (Mic. 6:16).

The death of Jezebel was surrounded with the arrogance that so characterized her life. She painted her eyes and adorned herself just for the occasion of issuing verbal taunts at Jehu from the palace window. She was pushed out of that window and died and, as prophesied (1 Kings 21:23), was eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:30-37). John J. Davis - The Bible Dictionary

(1 Ki 16:29-33 NIV) In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.

Ahab, Jezebel And Elijah

(1 Ki 17:1 NIV) Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

(Rev 11:6 KJV) These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Elijah, who along with Enoch will be one of the two witnesses to preach to the world in the future, has the God given power to withhold the rain. He withheld it for 3 1/2 years and will do it again during the tribulation period. As you read the Story of Ahab, Elijah and Jezebel, remember that this same type of thing will happen again in the future, perhaps in your lifetime. Elijah represents the prophets of the Lord, Ahab represents the Antichrist, and Jezebel and her heathen priests represent the false prophet and the false church.

If you are interested in future prophecy the old testament parallels show us almost exactly what will happen in the future, with the exception that it will occur on a worldwide basis rather than only in Israel or Judah. Also remember that the judgments described in Revelation are executed by angels at the request of the prophets and the occurrences in the old testament that we are about to study are most likely performed at the hand of angels also.

(1 Ki 17:2-6 NIV) Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

(1 Ki 17:7- NIV) Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread--only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I

am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it--and die." Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.'" She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

(1 Ki 17:17-24 NIV) Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!" The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

After 3 1/2 Years The Lord Permits Elijah To Let It Rain

(James 5:17 NIV) Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years

(1 Ki 18:1 NIV) After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

(1 Ki 18:2-8 NIV) So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria, and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD. While Jezebel was killing off the Lord's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some

grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals." So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another. As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?" "Yes," he replied. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"

(1 Ki 18:9-14 NIV) "What have I done wrong," asked Obadiah, "that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. But now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the LORD since my youth. Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. And now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' He will kill me!" Elijah said, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today."

(1 Ki 18:16-18 NIV) So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals.

(1 Ki 18:19-22 NIV) Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.

(1 Ki 18:23-29 NIV) Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name

of the LORD. The god who answers by fire--he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good." Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Sometimes God allows fallen angels and demons to perform miracles for their followers in private and amongst other unbelievers and idol worshippers, but, they never are allowed to win a battle when they are in a direct confrontation with a prophet of the Lord. It was the same type of situation when Moses faced off with Balaam and his sons. The magicians of Egypt could not stand against Moses, and the priests of Baal and Asherah could not stand against Elijah. Elijah will still have the power to requisition fire from heaven by the hand of the angels during the tribulation period, and he will use it often.

(Rev 11:3-5 NCV) And I will give power to my two witnesses to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, and they will be dressed in rough cloth to show their sadness." These two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone tries to hurt them, fire comes from their mouths and kills their enemies. And if anyone tries to hurt them in whatever way, in that same way that person will die.

The two witnesses will merely need to speak the word with their mouths and the angels will deliver fire from heaven upon their enemies, until it is time for the two witnesses to die and then be raised from the dead.

(1 Ki 18:30-39 NIV) Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel." With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and

he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood." "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

(1 Ki 18:40 NIV) Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

The Rain Comes

(1 Ki 18:41-46 NIV) And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back." The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

(1 Ki 19:1-2 NIV) Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

(1 Ki 19:3-5 NIV) Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's

journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

(1 Ki 19:6 NIV) He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

(1 Ki 19:7 NIV) The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

(1 Ki 19:8 NIV) So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

(1 Ki 19:9-10 NIV) There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

(1 Ki 19:11-12 NIV) The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

(1 Ki 19:13-14 NIV) When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

(1 Ki 19:15-17 NIV) The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint

Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

(1 Ki 19:18 NIV) Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

(Rom 11:2-5 NIV) God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

The Call Of Elisha To Succeed Elijah

(1 Ki 19:19-21 NCV) So Elijah left that place and found Elisha son of Shaphat plowing a field with a team of oxen. He owned twelve teams of oxen and was plowing with the twelfth team. Elijah came up to Elisha, took off his coat, and put it on Elisha. Then Elisha left his oxen and ran to follow Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and my mother good-bye," Elisha said. "Then I will go with you." Elijah answered, "Go back. It does not matter to me." So Elisha went back and took his pair of oxen and killed them. He used their wooden yoke for a fire. Then he cooked the meat and gave it to the people. After they ate it, Elisha left and followed Elijah and became his helper.

(1 Ki 20:1-3 NIV) Now Ben-Hadad king of Aram mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it. He sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, saying, "This is what Ben-Hadad says: 'Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine.'"

(1 Ki 20:4-6 NIV) The king of Israel answered, "Just as you say, my lord the king. I and all I have are yours." The messengers came again and said, "This is what Ben-Hadad says: 'I sent to demand your silver and gold, your wives and your children. But about this time tomorrow I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything you value and carry it away.'"

(1 Ki 20:7-9 NIV) The king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said to them, "See how this man is looking for trouble! When he sent

for my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, I did not refuse him." The elders and the people all answered, "Don't listen to him or agree to his demands." So he replied to Ben-Hadad's messengers, "Tell my lord the king, 'Your servant will do all you demanded the first time, but this demand I cannot meet.'" They left and took the answer back to Ben-Hadad.

(1 Ki 20:10 NIV) Then Ben-Hadad sent another message to Ahab: "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if enough dust remains in Samaria to give each of my men a handful."

(1 Ki 20:11 NIV) The king of Israel answered, "Tell him: 'One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off.'"

(1 Ki 20:12 NIV) Ben-Hadad heard this message while he and the kings were drinking in their tents, and he ordered his men: "Prepare to attack." So they prepared to attack the city.

(1 Ki 20:13 NIV) Meanwhile a prophet came to Ahab king of Israel and announced, "This is what the LORD says: 'Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

(1 Ki 20:14-15 NIV) "But who will do this?" asked Ahab. The prophet replied, "This is what the LORD says: 'The young officers of the provincial commanders will do it.'" "And who will start the battle?" he asked. The prophet answered, "You will." So Ahab summoned the young officers of the provincial commanders, 232 men. Then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all.

(1 Ki 20:16- NIV) They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. The young officers of the provincial commanders went out first. Now Ben-Hadad had dispatched scouts, who reported, "Men are advancing from Samaria." He said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive." The young officers of the provincial commanders marched out of the city with the army behind them and each one struck down his opponent. At that, the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit. But Ben-Hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. The king of Israel advanced and overpowered the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans. Afterward, the prophet came to the king of Israel and said, "Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again."

No doubt there was angelic help here for 232 men to rout 32 kings and their armies. The angel of the Lord apparently threw the 32 kings and their men into a state of confusion and caused them to flee from Israel.

(1 Ki 20:23-24 NIV) Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they. Do this: Remove all the kings from their commands and replace them with other officers. You must also raise an army like the one you lost--horse for horse and chariot for chariot--so we can fight Israel on the plains. Then surely we will be stronger than they." He agreed with them and acted accordingly.

(1 Ki 20:26- NIV) The next spring Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. When the Israelites were also mustered and given provisions, they marched out to meet them. The Israelites camped opposite them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside. The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, "This is what the LORD says: 'Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.'" For seven days they camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day the battle was joined. The Israelites inflicted a hundred thousand casualties on the Aramean foot soldiers in one day. The rest of them escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room.

(1 Ki 20:31-34 NIV) His officials said to him, "Look, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful. Let us go to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life." Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they went to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-Hadad says: 'Please let me live.'" The king answered, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." The men took this as a good sign and were quick to pick up his word. "Yes, your brother Ben-Hadad!" they said. "Go and get him," the king said. When Ben-Hadad came out, Ahab had him come up into his chariot. "I will return the cities my father took from your father," Ben-Hadad offered. "You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria." Ahab said, "On the basis of a treaty I will set you free." So he made a treaty with him, and let him go.

(1 Ki 20:35- NIV) By the word of the LORD one of the sons of the prophets

said to his companion, "Strike me with your weapon," but the man refused. So the prophet said, "Because you have not obeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me a lion will kill you." And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him. The prophet found another man and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him and wounded him. Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, 'Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared." "That is your sentence," the king of Israel said. "You have pronounced it yourself."

(1 Ki 20:41-43 NIV) Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.'" Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria.

The Atrocities Of Jezebel

Jezebel sets an example here of what the false prophet and the false church will do to Christians during the tribulation period. They will execute them with false charges of being disloyal to both God and the king when the opposite is true.

(1 Ki 21:1- NIV) Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth." But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?" He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." So she wrote letters in Ahab's

name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death." So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned and is dead." As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

(1 Ki 21:17-22 NIV) Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood-- yes, yours!'" Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!" "I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel-- slave or free. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin.'

(1 Ki 21:23-23 NIV) "And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' "Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country."

(1 Ki 21:25-26 NIV) (There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.)

(1 Ki 21:27 NIV) When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on

sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

(1 Ki 21:28- NIV) Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

This shows the mercy of God towards those who repent. Even after all of the evil king Ahab did, the Lord was still willing to forgive him. Though Ahab was forgiven for his sin, his family line would still be cut off from being the kings of Israel in the generation of Ahab's sons. God cannot go back on the word he has spoken, but true repentance can delay the punishment for the lifetime of the person repenting.

Jehoshaphat Rules In Judah

(1 Ki 22:41 NIV) Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

(2 Chr 17:1-10 NIV) Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel. He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and put garrisons in Judah and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured. The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because in his early years he walked in the ways his father David had followed. He did not consult the Baals but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. The LORD established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. His heart was devoted to the ways of the LORD; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah. In the third year of his reign he sent his officials Ben-Hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah to teach in the towns of Judah. With them were certain Levites--Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tob-Adonijah--and the priests Elishama and Jehoram. They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the LORD; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people. The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war with Jehoshaphat.

(1 Ki 22:42 NIV) Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

Israel And Judah Attack Aram

(2 Chr 18:1-4 NIV) Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. Some years later he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war." But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD."

(1 Ki 22:1-4 NIV) For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel. The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?" So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

(1 Ki 22:5-8 NIV) But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the LORD." So the king of Israel brought together the prophets--about four hundred men--and asked them, "Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Go," they answered, "for the Lord will give it into the king's hand." But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." "The king should not say that," Jehoshaphat replied.

(1 Ki 22:9-14 NIV) So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once." Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, "This is what the LORD says: 'With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.'" All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. "Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious," they said, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the

other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably." But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me."

(1 Ki 22:15-18 NIV) When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" "Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand." The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'" The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"

A Lying Spirit (Demon) Inspired The Prophecies Of The False Prophets

(2 Chr 18:18NIV) Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing on his right and on his left.

(2 Chr 18:19-22 NIV) And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ""By what means?' the LORD asked. "'I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. ""You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

(2 Chr 18:23-24 NIV) Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?" he asked. Micaiah replied, "You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room."

(2 Chr 18:25-27 NIV) The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son, and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.'" Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

(1 Ki 22:29 NIV) So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, "Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel." When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "Surely this is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him. But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded." All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town; everyone to his land!" So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there.

(1 Ki 22:38 NIV) They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared.

(1 Ki 22:39-40 NIV) As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Ahab rested with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.

Jehoshaphat Returns Safely

(2 Chr 19:1-3 NIV) When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you. There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God."

(2 Chr 19:4-7 NIV) Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. He told them, "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the LORD, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the

LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

(2 Chr 20:1-4 NIV) After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

(2 Chr 20:5-13 NIV) Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said: "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.' "But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

(2 Chr 20:14-17 NIV) Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the

LORD will be with you."

(2 Chr 20:18-19 NIV) Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.

(2 Chr 20:20-23 NIV) Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

(2 Chr 20:23-27 NIV) The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped. So Jehoshaphat and his men went to carry off their plunder, and they found among them a great amount of equipment and clothing and also articles of value--more than they could take away. There was so much plunder that it took three days to collect it. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, where they praised the LORD. This is why it is called the Valley of Beracah to this day. Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem, for the LORD had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies.

(2 Chr 20:28-32 NIV) They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the LORD with harps and lutes and trumpets. The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side. So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. He walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD.

Ahaziah Reigns in Israel

(1 Ki 22:40 NIV) Ahab rested with his fathers. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.

Beelzebub, The Prince Of Demons

There are ranks in Satan's minions also, just as there are in God's legions and in business and armies on earth. One of the princes of the demons (not the fallen angels, but the demons) according to Jesus is Beelzebub. This prince of demons was one of the gods worshipped by the heathen people living near the Israelites. The Israelites and their kings often worshipped these demon gods, angering the Lord. King Ahaziah, son of Ahab did so and because of that could not receive healing from the Lord.

(Mark 3:22 & Mat 12:25 NIV) And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub ! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.

(Luke 11:18 & Mark 3:26 NIV) If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.

(Mat 12:27 & Luke 11:19-20 NIV) And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

(Mat 10:25 NIV) It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

Ahaziah Consults Baal-Zebub (Beelzebub)

(2 Ki 1:2 NIV) Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, "Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from

this injury."

(2 Ki 1:3-4 NIV) But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" So Elijah went.

(2 Ki 1:5-8 NIV) When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you come back?" "A man came to meet us," they replied. "And he said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, 'This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending men to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" The king asked them, "What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?" They replied, "He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist." The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."

Ahaziah Seeks To Kill Elijah

The stupidity, arrogance and ignorance of mankind is often amazing. Here is Ahaziah, king of Israel who knows all about Elijah defeating the prophets of Baal, calling fire down from heaven and how the prophecies of the Lord came true concerning his father and Jezebel. How could he even think of defying the Lord and his prophet and hope to win. Why not repent and be healed?

Elijah Calls Down Fire From Heaven Again

Once again Elijah will request for from heaven and receive it. if we live long enough some of us may see this happen again live on news television.

(2 Ki 1:9-15 NIV) Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!'" Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men. At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, this is what the king says, 'Come down at once!'" "If I am a man of God," Elijah replied, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. So the

king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. "Man of God," he begged, "please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!" The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

(2 Ki 1:16-17 NIV) He told the king, "This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!" So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

Elisha Continues Elijah's Ministry

(2 Ki 2:1-8 NIV) When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it." Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho. The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it." Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on. Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

(2 Ki 2:9-15 NIV) When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours--

otherwise not." As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

(2 Ki 2:16-18 NIV) "Look," they said, "we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha replied, "do not send them." But they persisted until he was too ashamed to refuse. So he said, "Send them." And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, "Didn't I tell you not to go?"

(2 Ki 2:19-22 NIV) The men of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive." "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the LORD says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

Joram Reigns In Israel And Is Allies With Jehoshaphat Against Moab

(2 Ki 3:4-10 NIV) Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to supply the king of Israel with a hundred thousand lambs and with the wool of a hundred thousand rams. But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" "I will go with you," he replied. "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." "By what route shall we attack?" he asked. "Through the Desert of Edom," he answered. So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a

roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them. "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the LORD called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?"

(2 Ki 3:11-12 NIV) But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD through him?" An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

(2 Ki 3:13-20 NIV) Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do we have to do with each other? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother." "No," the king of Israel answered, "because it was the LORD who called us three kings together to hand us over to Moab." Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you. But now bring me a harpist." While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha and he said, "This is what the LORD says: Make this valley full of ditches. For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you. You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones." The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was--water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water.

(2 Ki 3:21-27 NIV) Now all the Moabites had heard that the kings had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border. When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red--like blood. "That's blood!" they said. "Those kings must have fought and slaughtered each other. Now to the plunder, Moab!" But when the Moabites came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and fought them until they fled. And the Israelites invaded the land and slaughtered the Moabites. They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it

as well. When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they failed. Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land.

Elisha Helps A Widow Whose Husband Was A Prophet

(2 Ki 4:1-7 NIV) The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?" "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

Elisha like his master Elijah helps a widow with a miracle concerning oil. The Lord is concerned about his people and those who serve him in the good times will be blessed in the bad times.

(Psa 37:25 NIV) I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

(Psa 33:18-19 NIV) But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

(Psa 37:18-20 NIV) The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty. But the wicked will perish: The Lord's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish--vanish like smoke.

Elisha Gives Counsel for Healing To Naaman The Leper

(2 Ki 5:1-7 NIV) Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy." As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

(2 Ki 5:8-14 NCV) When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent the king this message: "Why have you torn your clothes? Let Naaman come to me. Then he will know there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots to Elisha's house and stood outside the door. Elisha sent Naaman a messenger who said, "Go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. Then your skin will be healed, and you will be clean." Naaman became angry and left. He said, "I thought Elisha would surely come out and stand before me and call on the name of the LORD his God. I thought he would wave his hand over the place and heal the disease. The Abana and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, are better than all the waters of Israel. Why can't I wash in them and become clean?" So Naaman went away very angry. Naaman's servants came near and said to him, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? Doesn't it make more sense just to do it? After all, he only told you, 'Wash, and you will be clean.'" So Naaman went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, just as Elisha had said. Then his skin became new again, like the skin of a child. And he was clean.

(2 Ki 5:15-19 NCV) Naaman and all his group returned to Elisha. He stood before Elisha and said, "Look, I now know there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. Now please accept a gift from me." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives whom I serve, I won't accept anything." Naaman urged him to take the gift, but he refused. Then Naaman said, "If you won't take the gift, then please give me some soil--as much as two of my mules

can carry. From now on I'll not offer any burnt offering or sacrifice to any other gods but the LORD. But let the LORD pardon me for this: When my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship, he leans on my arm. Then I must bow in that temple. May the LORD pardon me when I do that." Elisha said to him, "Go in peace." Naaman left Elisha and went a short way.

(2 Ki 5:20-27 NCV) Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has not accepted what Naaman the Aramean brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I'll run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he got off the chariot to meet Gehazi. He asked, "Is everything all right?" Gehazi said, "Everything is all right. My master has sent me. He said, 'Two young men from the groups of prophets in the mountains of Ephraim just came to me. Please give them seventy-five pounds of silver and two changes of clothes.'" Naaman said, "Please take one hundred fifty pounds," and he urged Gehazi to take it. He tied one hundred fifty pounds of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes. Then he gave them to two of his servants to carry for Gehazi. When they came to the hill, Gehazi took these things from Naaman's servants and put them in the house. Then he let Naaman's servants go, and they left. When he came in and stood before his master, Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" "I didn't go anywhere," he answered. But Elisha said to him, "My spirit was with you. I knew when the man turned from his chariot to meet you. This isn't a time to take money, clothes, olives, grapes, sheep, oxen, male servants, or female servants. So Naaman's skin disease will come on you and your children forever." When Gehazi left Elisha, he had the disease and was as white as snow.

(2 Ki 6:1-7 NIV) The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to live." And he said, "Go." Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?" "I will," Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. "Oh, my lord," he cried out, "it was borrowed!" The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

(2 Ki 6:8-10 NIV) Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After

conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place." The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

(2 Ki 6:11-15 NIV) This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked.

Elisha And His Servants View The Angels Of God

(2 Ki 6:16-17 NIV) "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

(2 Ki 6:18 NIV) As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

(2 Ki 6:19-23 NIV) Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?" "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master." So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

(2 Ki 6:24-29 NIV) Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilized his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels. As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, "Help me, my lord the king!" The king replied, "If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the winepress?" Then he asked her, "What's the matter?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we'll eat my son.' So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him,' but she had hidden him."

From what occurs next it is apparent that the famine was prophesied by Elisha. Time and time again the wicked kings blame the prophets for their problems. The prophets merely deliver the word of the Lord and what he is going to do to the kings, they do not have the power themselves to do anything without the Lord sending his angels to make it happen. Persecuting the prophets is about as ridiculous as someone smashing a television set because they heard some news on it that they didn't like and blamed the TV for making it happen. But, over and over again the kings of Israel and Judah sought to kill the messengers rather than repent and have God forgive their sins and heal their land. It will happen again during the reign of Antichrist. He will blame Enoch and Elijah for withholding the rain and seek to kill them, and Christians as well.

(2 Ki 6:30-31 NIV) When the king heard the woman's words, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and there, underneath, he had sackcloth on his body. He said, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!"

(2 Ki 6:32-33 NCV) The king sent a messenger to Elisha, who was sitting in his house with the older leaders. But before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to them, "See, this murderer is sending men to cut off my head. When the messenger arrives, shut the door and hold it; don't let him in. The sound of his master's feet is behind him." Elisha was still talking with the leaders when the messenger arrived. The king said, "This trouble has come from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?"

(2 Ki 7:1-2 NCV) Elisha said, "Listen to the Lord's word. This is what the

LORD says: 'About this time tomorrow seven quarts of fine flour will be sold for two-fifths of an ounce of silver, and thirteen quarts of barley will be sold for two-fifths of an ounce of silver. This will happen at the gate of Samaria.'" Then the officer who was close to the king answered Elisha, "Even if the LORD opened windows in the sky, that couldn't happen." Elisha said, "You will see it with your eyes, but you will not eat any of it."

(2 Ki 7:3-5 NCV) There were four men with a skin disease at the entrance to the city gate. They said to each other, "Why do we sit here until we die? There is no food in the city. So if we go into the city, we will die there. If we stay here, we will die. So let's go to the Aramean camp. If they let us live, we will live. If they kill us, we die." So they got up at twilight and went to the Aramean camp, but when they arrived, no one was there.

(2 Ki 7:6-7 NCV) The Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a large army. They had said to each other, "The king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" So they got up and ran away in the twilight, leaving their tents, horses, and donkeys. They left the camp standing and ran for their lives.

(2 Ki 7:8-15 NCV) When the men with the skin disease came to the edge of the camp, they went into one of the tents and ate and drank. They carried silver, gold, and clothes out of the camp and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent. They carried things from this tent and hid them, also. Then they said to each other, "We're doing wrong. Today we have good news, but we are silent. If we wait until the sun comes up, we'll be discovered. Let's go right now and tell the people in the king's palace." So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city. They said, "We went to the Aramean camp, but no one is there; we didn't hear anyone. The horses and donkeys were still tied up, and the tents were still standing." Then the gatekeepers shouted out and told the people in the palace. The king got up in the night and said to his officers, "I'll tell you what the Arameans are doing to us. They know we are starving. They have gone out of the camp to hide in the field. They're saying, 'When the Israelites come out of the city, we'll capture them alive. Then we'll enter the city.'" One of his officers answered, "Let some men take five of the horses that are still left in the city. These men are like all the Israelites who are left; they are also about to die. Let's send them to see what has happened." So the men took two chariots with horses. The king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and see what has happened." The men followed the Aramean army as far as the Jordan River. The road was full of clothes and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away as they had

hurriedly left. So the messengers returned and told the king.

(2 Ki 7:16-20 NCV) Then the people went out and took valuables from the Aramean camp. So seven quarts of fine flour were sold for two-fifths of an ounce of silver, and thirteen quarts of barley were sold for two-fifths of an ounce of silver, just as the LORD had said. The king chose the officer who was close to him to guard the gate, but the people trampled the officer to death. This happened just as Elisha had told the king when the king came to his house. He had said, "Thirteen quarts of barley and seven quarts of fine flour will each sell for two-fifths of an ounce of silver about this time tomorrow at the gate of Samaria." But the officer had answered, "Even if the LORD opened windows in the sky, that couldn't happen." And Elisha had told him, "You will see it with your eyes, but you won't eat any of it." It happened to the officer just that way. The people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.

(2 Ki 8:1-6 NIV) Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the LORD has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years." The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years. At the end of the seven years she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to the king to beg for her house and land. The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, "Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done." Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to beg the king for her house and land. Gehazi said, "This is the woman, my lord the king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he assigned an official to her case and said to him, "Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now."

Here is another example of how the Lord cares for his people. Not only did God warn this woman of the impending seven years of famine so she could move to another area during it where there was no famine, but he also arranged so that just at exactly the same time as she returned to her former home it was returned to her by the king complete with back income. The Lord is good and merciful and cares for his people. Why would we want to trust in any other God?

Elisha Meets Ben-Hadad, King Of Syria

(2 Ki 8:7-10 NIV) Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Aram was ill. When the king was told, "The man of God has come all the way up here," he said to Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God. Consult the LORD through him; ask him, 'Will I recover from this illness?'" Hazael went to meet Elisha, taking with him as a gift forty camel-loads of all the finest wares of Damascus. He went in and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Aram has sent me to ask, 'Will I recover from this illness?'" Elisha answered, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover'; but the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die."

(2 Ki 8:11-13 NIV) He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael felt ashamed. Then the man of God began to weep. "Why is my lord weeping?" asked Hazael. "Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites," he answered. "You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women." Hazael said, "How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?" "The LORD has shown me that you will become king of Aram," answered Elisha. Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master. When Ben-Hadad asked, "What did Elisha say to you?" Hazael replied, "He told me that you would certainly recover."

(2 Ki 8:15 NIV) But the next day he took a thick cloth, soaked it in water and spread it over the king's face, so that he died. Then Hazael succeeded him as king.

Elisha the prophet was not lying to the king when he said that he would recover from his illness. The king had probably already recovered from the illness, and if not, it was not the illness that killed him. He was murdered by his trusted companion.

The Lord Is Still Faithful To His Promise To David

(2 Ki 8:16-19 NIV) In the fifth year of Joram son of Ahab king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat began his reign as king of Judah. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah.

He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.

(2 Chr 21:12-20 NCV) Then Jehoram received this letter from Elijah the prophet: This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says, "Jehoram, you have not lived as your father Jehoshaphat lived and as Asa king of Judah lived. But you have lived as the kings of Israel lived, leading the people of Judah and Jerusalem to sin against God, as Ahab and his family did. You have killed your brothers, and they were better than you. So now the LORD is about to punish your people, your children, wives, and everything you own. You will have a terrible disease in your intestines that will become worse every day. Finally it will cause your intestines to come out." The LORD caused the Philistines and the Arabs who lived near the Cushites to be angry with Jehoram. So the Philistines and Arabs attacked Judah and carried away all the wealth of Jehoram's palace, as well as his sons and wives. Only Jehoram's youngest son, Ahaziah, was left. After these things happened, the LORD gave Jehoram a disease in his intestines that could not be cured. After he was sick for two years, Jehoram's intestines came out because of the disease, and he died in terrible pain. The people did not make a fire to honor Jehoram as they had done for his ancestors. Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled eight years in Jerusalem. No one was sad when he died. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the graves for the kings.

Jezebel Finally Receives Her Just Reward

(2 Ki 9:30-37 NIV) Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?" He looked up at the window and called out, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. "Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot. Jehu went in and ate and drank. "Take care of that cursed woman," he said, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. They went back and told Jehu, who said, "This is the word of the LORD that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. Jezebel's body will be like refuse on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.'"

(Rev 2:20 NIV) Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

Jezebel, who outlived her husband Ahab by a number of years, was thrown down from the window of a tower. She is an example of the false prophet who will reign over the church in the future, who will be cast not from a tower, but into the lake of fire.

(Rev 19:20 KJV) And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The Line Of Ahab Is Destroyed, As Was Prophesied

(2 Ki 10:1-10 NCV) Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria to the officers and older leaders of Jezreel and to the guardians of the sons of Ahab. Jehu said, "You have your master's sons with you, and you have chariots, horses, a city with strong walls, and weapons. When you get this letter, choose the best and most worthy person among your master's sons, and make him king. Then fight for your master's family." But the officers and leaders of Jezreel were frightened. They said, "Two kings could not stand up to Jehu, so how can we?" The palace manager, the city governor, the leaders, and the guardians sent a message to Jehu. "We are your servants," they said. "We will do everything you tell us to do. We won't make any man king, so do whatever you think is best." Then Jehu wrote a second letter, saying, "If you are on my side and will obey me, cut off the heads of your master's sons and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow about this time." Now the seventy sons of the king's family were with the leading men of the city who were their guardians. When the leaders received the letter, they took the king's sons and killed all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. The messenger came to Jehu and told him, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons." Then Jehu said, "Lay the heads in two piles at the city gate until morning." In the morning, Jehu went out and stood before the people and said to them, "You are innocent. Look, I made plans against my master and killed him. But who killed all these? You should know that everything the LORD said about Ahab's family will come true. The LORD has spoken through his servant Elijah, and the LORD has done what he said."

(2 Ki 10:11-17 NCV) So Jehu killed everyone of Ahab's family in Jezreel who was still alive. He also killed all Ahab's leading men, close friends, and priests. No one who had helped Ahab was left alive. Then Jehu left and went to Samaria by way of the road to Beth Eked of the Shepherds. There Jehu met some relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah. Jehu asked, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are relatives of Ahaziah. We have come down to get revenge for the families of the king and the king's mother." Then Jehu said, "Take them alive!" So they captured Ahaziah's relatives alive and killed them at the well near Beth Eked--forty-two of them. Jehu did not leave anyone alive. After Jehu left there, he met Jehonadab son of Recab, who was also on his way to meet Jehu. Jehu greeted him and said, "Are you as good a friend to me as I am to you?" Jehonadab answered, "Yes, I am." Jehu said, "If you are, then give me your hand." So Jehonadab gave him his hand, and Jehu pulled him into the chariot. "Come with me," Jehu said. "You can see how strong my feelings are for the LORD." So Jehu had Jehonadab ride in his chariot. When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all of Ahab's family in Samaria. He destroyed all those who were left, just as the LORD had told Elijah it would happen.

Jehu Destroys The Prophets Of Baal

(2 Ki 10:18-25 NIV) Then Jehu brought all the people together and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. Now summon all the prophets of Baal, all his ministers and all his priests. See that no one is missing, because I am going to hold a great sacrifice for Baal. Anyone who fails to come will no longer live." But Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the ministers of Baal. Jehu said, "Call an assembly in honor of Baal." So they proclaimed it. Then he sent word throughout Israel, and all the ministers of Baal came; not one stayed away. They crowded into the temple of Baal until it was full from one end to the other. And Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, "Bring robes for all the ministers of Baal." So he brought out robes for them. Then Jehu and Jehonadab son of Recab went into the temple of Baal. Jehu said to the ministers of Baal, "Look around and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you--only ministers of Baal." So they went in to make sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had posted eighty men outside with this warning: "If one of you lets any of the men I am placing in your hands escape, it will be your life for his life." As soon as Jehu had finished making the burnt offering, he ordered the guards and officers: "Go in and kill them; let no one escape." So they cut them down with the sword. The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of

Baal.

(2 Ki 10:26-31 NCV) and brought out the pillars of the temple of Baal and burned them. They tore down the stone pillar of Baal, as well as the temple of Baal. And they made it into a sewage pit, as it is today. So Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel, but he did not stop doing the sins Jeroboam son of Nebat had done. Jeroboam had led Israel to sin by worshiping the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. The LORD said to Jehu, "You have done well in obeying what I said was right. You have done to the family of Ahab as I wanted. Because of this, your descendants as far as your great-great-grandchildren will be kings of Israel." But Jehu was not careful to follow the teachings of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not stop doing the same sins Jeroboam had done, by which he had led Israel to sin.

(2 Ki 13:1-9 NCV) Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria during the twenty-third year Joash son of Ahaziah was king of Judah. Jehoahaz ruled seventeen years, and he did what the LORD said was wrong. Jehoahaz did the same sins Jeroboam son of Nebat had done. Jeroboam had led Israel to sin, and Jehoahaz did not stop doing these same sins. So the LORD was angry with Israel and handed them over to Hazael king of Aram and his son Ben-Hadad for a long time. Then Jehoahaz begged the LORD, and the LORD listened to him. The LORD had seen the troubles of Israel; he saw how terribly the king of Aram was treating them. He gave Israel a man to save them, and they escaped from the Arameans. The Israelites then lived in their own homes as they had before, but they still did not stop doing the same sins that the family of Jeroboam had done. He had led Israel to sin, and they continued doing those sins. The Asherah idol also was left standing in Samaria. Nothing was left of Jehoahaz's army except fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers. The king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like chaff. Everything else Jehoahaz did and all his victories are written in the book of the history of the kings of Israel. Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria, and his son Jehoash became king in his place.

(2 Ki 13:10-13 NCV) Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king of Israel in Samaria during Joash's thirty-seventh year as king of Judah. Jehoash ruled sixteen years, and he did what the LORD said was wrong. He did not stop doing the same sins Jeroboam son of Nebat had done. Jeroboam had led Israel to sin, and Jehoash continued to do the same thing. Everything else he did and all his victories, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are written in the book of the history of the kings of Israel. Jehoash

died, and Jeroboam took his place on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

(2 Ki 13:14-19 NCV) At this time Elisha became sick. Before he died, Jehoash king of Israel went to Elisha and cried for him. Jehoash said, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" Elisha said to Jehoash, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. Then Elisha said to him, "Put your hand on the bow." So Jehoash put his hand on the bow. Then Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. Elisha said, "Open the east window." So Jehoash opened the window. Then Elisha said, "Shoot," and Jehoash shot. Elisha said, "The Lord's arrow of victory over Aram! You will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you destroy them." Elisha said, "Take the arrows." So Jehoash took them. Then Elisha said to him, "Strike the ground." So Jehoash struck the ground three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him. "You should have struck five or six times!" Elisha said. "Then you would have struck Aram until you had completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."

(2 Ki 13:20-23 NCV) Then Elisha died and was buried. At that time groups of Moabites would rob the land in the springtime. Once as some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a group of Moabites coming. The Israelites threw the dead man into Elisha's grave. When the man touched Elisha's bones, the man came back to life and stood on his feet. During all the days Jehoahaz was king, Hazael king of Aram troubled Israel. But the LORD was kind to the Israelites; he had mercy on them and helped them because of his agreement with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To this day he has never wanted to destroy them or reject them.

This concludes the chapter concerning the Kings of Judah and Israel during the times of Elijah and Elisha. Someday, probably very soon, Elijah will return and prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

(Mal 4:5 KJV) Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Chapter 13: Israel And Judah Go Into Captivity

God eventually had both Israel and Judah exiled from their land due to their sins. First Israel was dispersed and later Judah. Angels were active during this period both protecting those who would become a remnant and bringing judgment on those who worshipped false gods.

God Chose The Israelites To Be His People

(Lev 25:55 NCV) This is because the people of Israel are servants to me. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

(Lev 26:1-2 NCV) "Don't make idols for yourselves or set up statues or memorials. Don't put stone statues in your land to bow down to, because I am the LORD your God. 'Remember my Sabbaths, and respect my Holy Place. I am the LORD.

The Blessings Of God For Obedience

(Lev 26:3-12 NCV) "If you remember my laws and commands and obey them, I will give you rains at the right season; the land will produce crops, and the trees of the field will produce their fruit. Your threshing will continue until the grape harvest, and your grape harvest will continue until it is time to plant. Then you will have plenty to eat and live safely in your land. I will give peace to your country; you will lie down in peace, and no one will make you afraid. I will keep harmful animals out of your country, and armies will not pass through it. "You will chase your enemies and defeat them, killing them with your sword. Five of you will chase a hundred men; a hundred of you will chase ten thousand men. You will defeat your enemies and kill them with your sword. "Then I will show kindness to you and let you have many children; I will keep my agreement with you. You will have enough crops to last for more than a year. When you harvest the new crops, you will have to throw out the old ones to make room for them. Also I will place my Holy Tent among you, and I will not turn away from you. I will walk with you and be your God, and you will be my people.

The Punishment For Disobedience

(Lev 26:14-15 NCV) "But if you do not obey me and keep all my commands, and if you turn away from my rules and hate my laws, refusing

to obey all my commands, you have broken our agreement.

(Lev 26:16-17 NCV) As a result, I will do this to you: I will cause terrible things to happen to you. I will cause you to have disease and fever that will destroy your eyes and slowly kill you. You will not have success when you plant your seed, and your enemy will eat your crops. I will be against you, and your enemies will defeat you. These people who hate you will rule over you, and you will run away even when no one is chasing you.

(Lev 26:18-20 NCV) "If after all this you still do not obey me, I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break your great pride, and I will make the sky like iron and the earth like bronze. You will work hard, but it will not help. Your land will not grow any crops, and your trees will not give their fruit.

(Lev 26:21-22 NCV) "If you still turn against me and refuse to obey me, I will beat you seven times harder. The more you sin, the more you will be punished. I will send wild animals to attack you, and they will take your children away from you and destroy your cattle. They will make you so few in number the roads will be empty.

(Lev 26:23-26 NCV) "If you don't learn your lesson after all these things, and if you still turn against me, I will also turn against you. I will punish you seven more times for your sins. You broke my agreement, and I will punish you. I will bring armies against you, and if you go into your cities for safety, I will cause diseases to spread among you so that your enemy will defeat you. There will be very little bread to eat; ten women will be able to cook all your bread in one oven. They will measure each piece of bread, and you will eat, but you will still be hungry.

(Lev 26:27-32 NCV) "If you still refuse to listen to me and still turn against me, I will show my great anger; I will punish you seven more times for your sins. You will eat the bodies of your sons and daughters. I will destroy your places where gods are worshiped and cut down your incense altars. I will pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols. I will hate you. I will destroy your cities and make your holy places empty, and I will not smell the pleasing smell of your offerings. I will make the land empty so that your enemies who come to live in it will be shocked at it.

The Prophecy Of The Dispersion Of Israel And Judah For Their Sins

(Lev 26:33-35 NCV) I will scatter you among the nations, and I will pull out

my sword and destroy you. Your land will become empty, your cities a waste. When you are taken to your enemy's country, your land will finally get its rest. It will enjoy its time of rest all the time it lies empty. During the time the land is empty, it will have the rest you should have given it while you lived in it.

(Lev 26:36-39 NCV) "Those of you who are left alive will lose their courage in the land of their enemies. They will be frightened by the sound of a leaf being blown by the wind. They will run as if someone were chasing them with a sword, and they will fall even when no one is chasing them. They will fall over each other, as if someone were chasing them with a sword, even though no one is chasing them. You will not be strong enough to stand up against your enemies. You will die among other nations and disappear in your enemies' countries. So those who are left alive will rot away in their enemies' countries because of their sins. They will also rot away because of their ancestors' sins.

(Lev 26:40-42 NCV) "But maybe the people will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors; maybe they will admit they turned against me and sinned against me, which made me turn against them and send them into the land of their enemies. If these disobedient people are sorry for what they did and accept punishment for their sin, I will remember my agreement with Jacob, my agreement with Isaac, and my agreement with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

(Lev 26:43-45 NCV) The land will be left empty by its people, and it will enjoy its time of rest as it lies bare without them. Then those who are left alive will accept the punishment for their sins. They will learn that they were punished because they hated my laws and refused to obey my rules. But even though this is true, I will not turn away from them when they are in the land of their enemies. I will not hate them so much that I completely destroy them and break my agreement with them, because I am the LORD their God. For their good I will remember the agreement with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt so I could become their God; the other nations saw these things. I am the LORD."

(Lev 26:46 NCV) These are the laws, rules, and teachings the LORD made between himself and the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai.

There is a lesson here for all of us. We, as Christians are God's people and he will deal with us in the same manner as the Israelites. It not out of a desire for retribution that God sends judgment, but out a desire for us to

repent and be saved, or if we are already saved but caught up in sin then god wants us to repent so he can bless us with all of the good things promised in his word.

(Heb 12:11 KJV) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Unbelievers may seem to get away with sin for most of their lives. Since they will never experience heaven God often allows them to have all of the pleasures on earth they can get for themselves.

Luke 16:25 “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.’

But, to the saved he sends chastening so that we may repent and lay up treasure in heaven that will last throughout eternity. God sends chastening for our good that we may shine like the stars of heaven forever in his kingdom.

(Mat 6:19-21 NCV) "Don't store treasures for yourselves here on earth where moths and rust will destroy them and thieves can break in and steal them. But store your treasures in heaven where they cannot be destroyed by moths or rust and where thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will be where your treasure is.

(Dan 12:3 NCV) The wise people will shine like the brightness of the sky. Those who teach others to live right will shine like stars forever and ever.

Isaiah And The Angels

The prophet Isaiah whose ministry occurred during the time of Israel being carried into captivity into Assyria and during the reign of Uzziah (Azariah) king of Judah, had visions of angels and was well aware of the cherubim and the angel of the presence that had protected the Israelites until God removed that protection due to their sins.

(Isa 6:1-4 NASB) In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one

called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

(Isa 37:16 NIV) "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

(Isa 63:9 NIV) In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

The Rejection Of Israel Because Of Their Sins

The northern kingdom, Israel, committed so much evil against the Lord that God would not even permit the army of Judah to win a battle if Israel marched with them to war. Ahaziah had paid one hundred talents of silver to the Israeli army to assist them in war. God sent a prophet to warn the king of Judah that if Israel marched with them to war they would lose the battle. This is how disgusting Israel became in God's sight and because of this soon after he permitted the king of Assyria to carry Israel away from their land and into dispersion. They remain scattered throughout the world until today in 2003, have never returned, and will not return until Jesus Christ regathers them and brings them to Israel at the start of the millennium.

(2 Chr 24:17-20 NIV) After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. They abandoned the temple of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and worshiped Asherah poles and idols. Because of their guilt, God's anger came upon Judah and Jerusalem. Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen. Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the Lord's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'"

(2 Chr 25:7-10 NIV) But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, these troops from Israel must not march with you, for the LORD is not with Israel--not with any of the people of Ephraim. Even if you go and fight courageously in battle, God will overthrow you before the enemy, for God

has the power to help or to overthrow." Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what about the hundred talents I paid for these Israelite troops?" The man of God replied, "The LORD can give you much more than that." So Amaziah dismissed the troops who had come to him from Ephraim and sent them home. They were furious with Judah and left for home in a great rage.

Although Judah could see the anger of the Lord at Israel for worshipping idols this did not stop their evil kings from following these practices. The anger of the Lord was growing against Judah also and eventually they would also be removed from their homeland, but only for 70 years.

(2 Chr 25:11-14 NIV) Amaziah then marshaled his strength and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where he killed ten thousand men of Seir. The army of Judah also captured ten thousand men alive, took them to the top of a cliff and threw them down so that all were dashed to pieces. Meanwhile the troops that Amaziah had sent back and had not allowed to take part in the war raided Judean towns from Samaria to Beth Horon. They killed three thousand people and carried off great quantities of plunder. When Amaziah returned from slaughtering the Edomites, he brought back the gods of the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down to them and burned sacrifices to them.

(2 Chr 25:15-16 NIV) The anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and he sent a prophet to him, who said, "Why do you consult this people's gods, which could not save their own people from your hand?" While he was still speaking, the king said to him, "Have we appointed you an adviser to the king? Stop! Why be struck down?" So the prophet stopped but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."

Israel Is Carried Into Captivity To Assyria

(2 Ki 17:9-18 NIV) The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the LORD to anger. They worshiped idols, though the LORD had said, "You shall not do this." The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in

accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the LORD their God. They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do. They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshiped Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left,

The Israelites did everything that the Lord commanded them not to do when he brought them out of Egypt. They worshipped idols in the form of two golden calves, they worshipped Asherah, they worshipped the sun and the moon and the stars, they sacrificed their children to demons, and along with all of that they practiced divination and sorcery. So, god destroyed their nation having them conquered by the nation of Assyria.

(2 Ki 17:19-23 NIV) and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. Therefore the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin. The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.

The Samaritans Are the Descendants of People From Babylon

(2 Ki 17:24-55 NIV) The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. When they first lived there, they did not worship the LORD; so he sent lions among them and they killed some of the people. It was reported

to the king of Assyria: "The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires." Then the king of Assyria gave this order: "Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires." So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the LORD. Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled, and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. The men from Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men from Cuthah made Nergal, and the men from Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. They worshiped the LORD, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the LORD, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.

(2 Ki 17:34-41 NIV) To this day they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: "Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them. But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. You must always be careful to keep the decrees and ordinances, the laws and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies." They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did

Hezekiah Becomes King of Judah

(2 Ki 18:1-8 NIV) In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what

was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.) Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory.

(2 Ki 18:9-12 NIV) In King Hezekiah's fourth year, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. At the end of three years the Assyrians took it. So Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel. The king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in towns of the Medes. This happened because they had not obeyed the LORD their God, but had violated his covenant--all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out.

Assyria Attacks Judah

(2 Ki 18:13-16 NIV) In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

Hezekiah paid tribute to the king of Assyria even stripping the gold from the temple to give to the king. However even after all this Sennacherib was not satisfied and wanted more. He wanted everything of monetary value in Judah and to make the people his virtual slaves and carry them off as he had done to Israel.

(2 Chr 32:1 NIV) After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself.

Having conquered Israel by God's permission due to Israel's sin, the Assyrians became proud and puffed up thinking that by their own power they had defeated Israel and taken them into captivity. They now thought that with their great power they could also conquer Judah. It was not yet God's time for Judah to be carried into captivity so the Assyrians were doomed to failure. King Hezekiah, descendant of David was on the throne in Jerusalem when Assyria made war on Judah. The righteous acts of king Hezekiah spared Judah from God's wrath during the time of Hezekiah's reign.

(2 Chr 32:2-8 NIV) When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to make war on Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. A large force of men assembled, and they blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?" they said. Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced the supporting terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields. He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles." And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

(2 Chr 32:9-12 NIV) Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there: "This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, 'The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,' he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god's high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it'?"

King Sennacherib did not understand the difference between the altars of idols that Hezekiah had destroyed and the worship of the Lord that Hezekiah had renewed in Jerusalem. To the thinking of the Assyrian king Hezekiah had somehow abandoned the God of Israel by ordering the Jews to worship in Jerusalem, when exactly the opposite was true. It is clear that Sennacherib did not at all understand who the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was.

(2 Ki 18:20-22 NIV) You say you have strategy and military strength--but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. And if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"--isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem"?

(2 Chr 32:13-15 NIV) "Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my fathers destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!"

(2 Ki 18:23-24 NIV) "'Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses--if you can put riders on them! How can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen?"

(2 Ki 18:25- NIV) Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.'" Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall." But the commander replied, "Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the men sitting on the wall--who, like you, will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine?" Then the commander stood and called

out in Hebrew: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' "Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death! "Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him."

(2 Chr 32:16-17 NIV) Sennacherib's officers spoke further against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah. The king also wrote letters insulting the LORD, the God of Israel, and saying this against him: "Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand."

(2 Ki 18:37 NIV) Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said.

King Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter reviling the power of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and placed it before the Lord in the temple and prayed to the Lord for help. Hezekiah laid his problem right before the Lord at the altar, and the Lord heard him and responded. We should all follow Hezekiah's example in times of trouble.

(2 Ki 19:1 NIV) When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD.

(Isa 37:14-15 NCV) When Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it, he went up to the Temple of the LORD. He spread the letter out before the LORD And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

(2 Ki 19:15-19 NIV) And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. "It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

(Isa 37:16 NIV) "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Hezekiah prayer to the Lord, the God who is enthroned between the cherubim. The God who is surrounded by his mighty creations, the angels, whom he can send to rescue those who call on him for help.

(2 Ki 19:2-4 NIV) He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They told him, "This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives."

(2 Chr 32:20 NIV) King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this.

(Isa 37:21-25 NCV) Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah that said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'You prayed to me about Sennacherib king of Assyria. So this is what the LORD has said against Sennacherib: The people of Jerusalem hate you and make fun of you; the people of Jerusalem laugh at you as you run away. You have insulted me and spoken against me; you have raised your voice against me. You have a proud look on your face, which is against me, the Holy One of Israel! You have sent your messengers to insult the Lord. You have said, "With my many chariots I have gone to the tops of the mountains, to the

highest mountains of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars and its best pine trees. I have gone to its greatest heights and its best forests. I have dug wells in foreign countries and drunk water there. By the soles of my feet, I have dried up all the rivers of Egypt."

(2 Ki 19:20-22 NIV) Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: "'The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises you and mocks you. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel!

It was by God's divine providence that Sennacherib was permitted to conquer other nations, not by the king's own power and might. But, there was a limit to the land areas that God wanted the king of Assyria to control. Sennacherib was out of control, filled with pride, and now instead of completing God's will he was fighting against it. God can and does use evil men and unbelievers to do his bidding, even when they don't know it. That is the reason that all things work for the good, because God is in control. Those who do God's will though without knowing it receive no reward for it.

(Isa 37:26 NCV) "'King of Assyria, surely you have heard. Long ago I, the LORD, planned these things. Long ago I designed them, and now I have made them happen. I allowed you to turn those strong, walled cities into piles of rocks.

(2 Ki 19:25 NIV) "'Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone.

(Isa 37:27-29 NCV) The people in those cities were weak; they were frightened and put to shame. They were like grass in the field, like tender, young grass, like grass on the housetop that is burned by the wind before it can grow. "'I know when you rest, when you come and go, and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me, and because I have heard your proud words, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth. Then I will force you to leave my country the same way you came.'

**The Lord Always Keeps A Remnant
For The Sake Of His Servant David**

(2 Ki 19:32-33 NIV) "Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant."

(2 Ki 19:6-7 NIV) Isaiah said to them, "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard--those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! I am going to put such a spirit in him that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.'"

(2 Ki 19:30-31 NIV) Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

(Isa 37:33-35 NCV) "So this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria: 'He will not enter this city or even shoot an arrow here. He will not fight against it with shields or build a ramp to attack the city walls. He will return to his country the same way he came, and he will not enter this city,' says the LORD. 'I will defend and save this city for my sake and for David, my servant.'"

Hundreds of years later the Lord had not forgotten his promise to David. God was still making sure that a descendant of David was on a throne ruling over some Israelites. At the same time God was preparing for the future time when Judah would be carried into captivity and the throne in Jerusalem would cease to exist. The people whom Sennacherib carried away from Israel also contained descendants of David fathered by his son Solomon and many other sons David had. By the Time Judah would be carried into captivity more than a hundred years after Israel there would already be descendants of David ruling over Israelites in other parts of the world, keeping God's promises to David intact.

One of the Psalms of David was also fulfilled again when God sent his angel to deliver Judah and Hezekiah.

(Psa 35:5-6 KJV) Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel

of the LORD persecute them.

God Saves Judah Through Angelic Intervention

(2 Ki 19:35-37 NIV) That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer cut him down with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.

(2 Chr 32:21-22 NCV) Then the LORD sent an angel who killed all the soldiers, leaders, and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So the king went back to his own country in disgrace. When he went into the temple of his god, some of his own sons killed him with a sword. So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people in Jerusalem from Sennacherib king of Assyria and from all other people. He took care of them on every side.

(Isa 37:36-38 NCV) Then the angel of the LORD went out and killed one hundred eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up early the next morning, they saw all the dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria left and went back to Nineveh and stayed there. One day as Sennacherib was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with a sword. Then they escaped to the land of Ararat. So Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon became king of Assyria.

(2 Chr 32:23 NIV) Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was highly regarded by all the nations.

This example of divine angelic intervention must be a very important lesson for us to learn because God saw fit to include it in the book of Kings, Chronicles and in Isaiah. It is important to note that just one angel slew almost 200,000 men of war. How easy is it then for God to send an angel to answer our small requests if we have faith and are praying in accordance with God's will. Most of our needs are small in comparison with that of Hezekiah during the siege of Jerusalem.

Hezekiah Prays For Healing And Receives It

(2 Chr 32:24-26 NIV) In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord's wrath did not come upon them during the days of Hezekiah.

(Isa 38:1-3 NCV) At that time Hezekiah became very sick; he was almost dead. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to see him and told him, "This is what the LORD says: Make arrangements, because you are not going to live, but die." Hezekiah turned toward the wall and prayed to the LORD, "LORD, please remember that I have always obeyed you. I have given myself completely to you and have done what you said was right." Then Hezekiah cried loudly.

(Isa 38:4-5 NCV) Then the LORD spoke his word to Isaiah: "Go to Hezekiah and tell him: 'This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. So I will add fifteen years to your life.'

(2 Ki 20:4-6 NIV) Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.'"

Hezekiah Displays His Treasures

(Isa 39:1-3 NCV) At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan was king of Babylon. He sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, because he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick and was now well. Hezekiah was pleased and showed the messengers what was in his storehouses: the silver, gold, spices, expensive perfumes, his swords and shields, and all his wealth. He showed them everything in his palace and in his kingdom. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did these men say? Where did they come from?" Hezekiah said, "They came from a faraway country--from Babylon."

(Isa 39:4-6 NCV) So Isaiah asked him, "What did they see in your palace?" Hezekiah said, "They saw everything in my palace. I showed them all my wealth." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah: "Listen to the words of the LORD All-Powerful: 'In the future everything in your palace and everything your ancestors have stored up until this day will be taken away to Babylon. Nothing will be left,' says the LORD.

(Isa 39:7-8 NCV) Some of your own children, those who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become servants in the palace of the king of Babylon." Hezekiah told Isaiah, "These words from the LORD are good." He said this because he thought, "There will be peace and security in my lifetime."

(2 Ki 20:16-18 NIV) Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

This prophecy was fulfilled in the time of the prophet Daniel when he and many other Israelite young men were made eunuchs and served the kings of Babylon for seventy years.

Manasseh Becomes King

(2 Ki 20:20-21 NIV) As for the other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Hezekiah rested with his fathers. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king.

(2 Ki 21:1 NIV) Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah.

(2 Ki 21:16-18 NIV) Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end--besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD. As for the other events of Manasseh's reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of

Judah? Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

Amon Succeeds Manasseh As King

(2 Ki 21:19-24 NIV) Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. He walked in all the ways of his father; he worshiped the idols his father had worshiped, and bowed down to them. He forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated the king in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place.

Josiah Takes The Throne Of David

(2 Ki 22:1-2 NIV) Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

Josiah Roots Out Evil In Judah

(2 Ki 23:14-15 NIV) Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones. Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin--even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also.

An Ancient Prophecy Fulfilled

(2 Ki 23:16-18 NIV) Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things. The king asked, "What is that tombstone I see?" The men of the city said, "It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very things you have done to it." "Leave it alone," he said. "Don't let anyone disturb his bones." So they spared his bones and

those of the prophet who had come from Samaria.

This is the prophecy that was given many years before by a prophet of the Lord, which King Josiah fulfilled.

(1 Ki 13:1-2 NIV) By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'"

(2 Ki 23:19-23 NCV) The kings of Israel had built temples for worshiping gods in the cities of Samaria, which had caused the LORD to be angry. Josiah removed all those temples and did the same things as he had done at Bethel. He killed all the priests of those places of worship; he killed them on the altars and burned human bones on the altars. Then he went back to Jerusalem. The king commanded all the people, "Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this Book of the Agreement." The Passover had not been celebrated like this since the judges led Israel. Nor had one like it happened while there were kings of Israel and kings of Judah. This Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's rule.

Jeremiah Warns Judah Of Impending Disaster

(Jer 25:3-10 NIV) For twenty-three years--from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day--the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. They said, "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your fathers for ever and ever. Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not provoke me to anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you." "But you did not listen to me," declares the LORD, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves." Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an

object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp.

(Jer 25:11 NIV) This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

(Jer 25:12 NIV) "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever.

(Jer 25:13-14 NIV) I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations. They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands."

Judah Was Still Practicing Occult Religions

(2 Ki 23:24-25 NIV) Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD. Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did--with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

Throughout the histories of Judah and Israel many judges and kings banished the mediums, spiritists and demon worshippers. However, as soon as that king had passed on the people always returned to their former evil practices. It is the same today in the united States and the rest of the world. When there is a lack of Christian leadership at the head of a country everything collapses and regresses to the mean. Like a basket of fruit without refrigeration that gets rotten over time is a country without good God fearing leadership at the helm.

(2 Ki 23:26-27 NIV) Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger. So the LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be.'"

The Sins Of Judah As Detailed By The Prophet Ezekiel

(Ezek 8:1-2 NIV) In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign LORD came upon me there. I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal.

Ezekiel saw an angel in the appearance of a man clothed with fire. This angel was about to show him why God permitted the Jews to be carried off to Babylon.

Idol Worship

(Ezek 8:3-6 NIV) He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain. Then he said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and in the entrance north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy.

(Ezek 8:6-13 NIV) And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing--the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable." Then he brought me to the entrance to the court. I looked, and I saw a hole in the wall. He said to me, "Son of man, now dig into the wall." So I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there. And he said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here." So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel. In front of them stood seventy elders of the house of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising. He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'" Again, he said, "You will see them doing things that are even more detestable."

Weeping For Tammuz And Worshipping Nimrod (Baal)

(Ezek 8:14-16 NIV) Then he brought me to the entrance to the north gate of the house of the LORD, and I saw women sitting there, mourning for Tammuz. He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this."

Note: Tammuz, if you remember from the earlier chapter was the son of Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod. Semiramis gave birth to Tammuz more than nine months after the death of Nimrod. She claimed that the child who was born, Tammuz was not the result of a human relationship, but that Nimrod had ascended to heaven and replaced the gods of the sun. She further claimed that Nimrod now being the sun god and had miraculously impregnated her via a sunbeam. That is Satan's counterfeit of the virgin birth of Christ and the resurrection and ascension of Christ in a sense. In Satan's religion Nimrod ascended to heaven and is forever in the sky as the sun watching over the children of men. Tammuz, fathered by a sunbeam is Satan's counterfeit of the incarnation of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Parts of this religion may once again be embraced and promoted during the tribulation period as Mystery Babylon once again becomes a popular religion. Watch for it.

(Ezek 8:16-18 NIV) He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east. He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually provoke me to anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose! Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

In addition to worshipping Tammuz the Jews were also worshipping Nimrod who Semiramis claimed was the sun god. They were practicing the religion of "Mystery Babylon," the religion of Satan and the fallen angels, which God hates.

An Angel Marks The Saved For Protection While Those Unmarked Are Unprotected

(Ezek 9:1-3 NCV) Then he shouted with a loud voice in my ears, "You who

are chosen to punish this city, come near with your weapon in your hand." Then six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his powerful weapon in his hand. Among them was a man dressed in linen with a writing case at his side. The men went in and stood by the bronze altar. Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the creatures with wings, where it had been, to the place in the Temple where the door opened. He called to the man dressed in linen who had the writing case at his side.

Judgment Begins At The Temple, The House Of God

(Ezek 9:4-6 NCV) He said to the man, "Go through Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the people who groan and cry about all the hateful things being done among them." As I listened, he said to the other men, "Go through the city behind the man dressed in linen and kill. Don't pity anyone, and don't show mercy. Kill and destroy old men, young men and women, little children, and older women, but don't touch any who have the mark on them. Start at my Temple." So they started with the older leaders who were in front of the Temple.

(Ezek 9:7-10 NCV) Then he said to the men, "Make the Temple unclean, and fill the courtyards with those who have been killed. Go out!" So the men went out and killed the people in the city. While the men were killing the people, I was left alone. I bowed facedown on the ground and I cried out, "Oh, Lord GOD! Will you destroy everyone left alive in Israel when you turn loose your anger on Jerusalem?" Then he said to me, "The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is very great. The land is filled with people who murder, and the city is full of people who are not fair. The people say, 'The LORD has left the land, and the LORD does not see.' But I will have no pity, nor will I show mercy. I will bring their evil back on their heads."

(Ezek 9:11 NCV) Then the man dressed in linen with the writing case at his side reported, "I have done just as you commanded me."

Ezekiel Sees A Vision Of Cherubims

(Ezek 10:1-20 NIV) I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. The LORD said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And as I watched, he went in. Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man

went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD. The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks. When the LORD commanded the man in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel. Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went out. (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like the hands of a man.) I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim; the wheels sparkled like chrysolite. As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the wheels did not turn about as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went. Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes, as were their four wheels. I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels." Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River. When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them. Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim.

Ezekiel Mourns, God Promises Restoration

(Ezek 11:1-2 NIV) Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the LORD that faces east. There at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. The LORD said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in

this city.

(Ezek 11:13-16 NIV) Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell facedown and cried out in a loud voice, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?" The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, your brothers--your brothers who are your blood relatives and the whole house of Israel--are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.' "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'

(Ezek 11:17-21 NIV) "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

(Ezek 11:22-23 NIV) Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it.

(Ezek 11:24-25 NIV) The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me, and I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

Ezekiel Is A Sign To The People

(Ezek 12:1-6 NIV) The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people. "Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place.

Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile. While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it. Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel."

(Ezek 12:7-11 NIV) So I did as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my things packed for exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I took my belongings out at dusk, carrying them on my shoulders while they watched. In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, did not that rebellious house of Israel ask you, 'What are you doing?' "Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and the whole house of Israel who are there.' Say to them, 'I am a sign to you.' "As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into exile as captives.

(Ezek 12:12-13 NIV) "The prince among them will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave, and a hole will be dug in the wall for him to go through. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land. I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die.

(Ezek 12:14-15 NIV) I will scatter to the winds all those around him--his staff and all his troops--and I will pursue them with drawn sword. "They will know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries.

(Ezek 12:16 NIV) But I will spare a few of them from the sword, famine and plague, so that in the nations where they go they may acknowledge all their detestable practices. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

The Fall Of The Kingdom Of Judah

(2 Ki 23:29-30 NIV) While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Neco faced him and killed him at Megiddo. Josiah's servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of

his father.

(2 Ki 23:31-33 NIV) Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done. Pharaoh Neco put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

(2 Ki 23:34-37 NIV) Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, and there he died. Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Neco the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah. And he did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his fathers had done.

(2 Ki 24:1-3 NIV) During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets. Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood.

(2 Ki 24:6 NIV) Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

(2 Ki 24:7 NIV) The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

Nebuchadnezzar Conquers Jerusalem During The Reign Of Jehoiachin

(2 Ki 24:8-9 NIV) Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became

king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.

(2 Ki 24:10-13 NIV) At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him. In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD.

(2 Ki 24:14-16 NIV) He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans--a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land. The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand craftsmen and artisans.

Zedekiah Is Appointed Governor By Nebuchadnezzar

(2 Ki 24:17-19 NIV) He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.

(2 Chr 36:11-16 NIV) Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on

his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

Zedekiah had the opportunity to live in peace under the yoke of the king of Babylon and pay tribute to him until the seventy years of punishment from the Lord were accomplished. But, instead he listened to his wicked and youthful advisors, and rejected the advice of the Lord's prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, rebelled against the king of Babylon and came to ruin.

The Jewish historian Josephus give us some detail as to why Zedekiah disbelieved the prophets. There is a good lesson here for all of us concerning biblical study.

Josephus Chapter 7

THAT THE KING OF BABYLON REPENTED OF MAKING JEHOIACHIN KING, AND TOOK HIM AWAY TO BABYLON, AND DELIVERED THE KINGDOM TO ZEDEKIAH. THIS KING WOULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT WAS PREDICTED BY JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL, BUT JOINED HIMSELF TO THE EGYPTIANS; WHO, WHEN THEY CAME INTO JUDEA, WERE VANQUISHED BY THE KING OF BABYLON;

Now Zedekiah was twenty-and-one years old when he took the government; and had the same mother with his brother Jehoiachin, but was a despiser of justice and of his duty, for truly those of the same age with him were wicked about him, and the whole multitude did what unjust and insolent things they pleased; for which reason the prophet Jeremiah came often to him, and protested to him, and insisted, that he must leave off his impieties and transgressions, and take care of what was right, and neither give ear to the rulers (among whom were wicked men) nor give credit to their false prophets who deluded them, as if the king of Babylon would make no more war against him, and as if the Egyptians would make war against him, and conquer him, since what they said was not true; and the events would not prove such [as they expected]. Now as to Zedekiah himself, while he heard the prophet speak, he believed him, and agreed to everything as true, and supposed it was for his advantage; but then his friends perverted him, and dissuaded him from what the prophet advised, and obliged him to do what they pleased.

Ezekiel also foretold in Babylon what calamities were coming upon the people, which when he heard, he sent accounts of them unto Jerusalem;

but Zedekiah did not believe their prophecies, for the reason following:—It happened that the two prophets agreed with one another in what they said as in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with him, and said, that Zedekiah should not see Babylon; while Jeremiah said to him, that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds; and because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, he disbelieved what they both appeared to agree in, and condemned them as not speaking truth therein, although all the things foretold him did come to pass according to their prophecies, as we shall show upon a fitter opportunity.

Many people today, people who do not have spiritual understanding reject the bible and say that in places it contradicts itself. Zedekiah thought the same thing about the prophecies that were given in his time. The prophet Ezekiel said that Zedekiah would not see Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah said that Zedekiah would see the king of Babylon face to face.

(Ezek 12:12-13 NIV) "The prince among them will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave, and a hole will be dug in the wall for him to go through. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land. I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die.

(Jer 32:4 NIV) Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hands of the Babylonians but will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes.

These two words from the prophets of the Lord seemed to contradict each other so Zedekiah and his youthful advisors rejected the words of both prophets and thought themselves safe from harm. As we shall see, both prophecies came true.

Zedekiah Rebels Against King Nebuchadnezzar

(2 Ki 24:20 NIV) It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

(2 Ki 25:1-6 NIV) So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built

siege works all around it. The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him.

Zedekiah's Sons Are Slain and His Eyes Are Gouged Out

(Jer 39:6-7 NIV) There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and also killed all the nobles of Judah. Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

Both prophets were correct. Zedekiah saw the king of Babylon face to face as he was being judged after he was captured while trying to escape from Jerusalem. But Zedekiah never saw Babylon because he was blinded before he was carried off in chains and carried off to prison.

Sometimes the bible appears to contradict itself because God has not chosen to give us every detail of every situation. Like witnesses to a car accident who had different views of it occurring see different things and differ in their reports to a police officer, (but perhaps the views from different angles may both be true) so do prophets of the Lord see different details of future events with all of them being true. Don't ever let anyone convince you that the bible is not true because of not being able to fully understand all of the prophecies in it yet today. When the prophecies are fulfilled and we look back on them after the fact we will see that every word of God was fulfilled right to the letter. Let the stupidity of Zedekiah doubting God's word be an example to us all.

Josephus give us a more detailed account of the capture of Zedekiah, his punishment and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Josephus Chapter 8

HOW THE KING OF BABYLON TOOK JERUSALEM AND BURNT THE TEMPLE, AND REMOVED THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM AND

ZEDEKIAH TO BABYLON. AS ALSO, WHO THEY WERE THAT HAD SUCCEEDED IN THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD UNDER THE KINGS

Now the king of Babylon was very intent and earnest upon the siege of Jerusalem; and he erected towers upon great banks of earth and from them repelled those that stood upon the walls: he also made a great number of such banks round about the whole city, the height of which was equal to those walls. And this siege they endured for eighteen months, until they were destroyed by the famine, and by the darts which the enemy threw at them from the towers.

Now the city was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. They were indeed only generals of the king of Babylon, to whom Nebuchadnezzar committed the care of the siege, for he abode himself in the city of Riblah. And when the city was taken about midnight, and the enemy's generals were entered into the temple, and when Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives and his children, and his captains and friends, and with them fled out of the city, through the fortified ditch, and through the desert;

And when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this, at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jericho, and encompassed him about. But for those friends and captains of Zedekiah who had fled out of the city with him, when they saw their enemies near them, they left him and dispersed themselves, some one way and some another, and every one resolved to save himself; so the enemy took Zedekiah alive, when he was deserted by all but a few, with his children and his wives, and brought him to the king. When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him.

He also reproached him for his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and given it him, he had made use of the power he gave him against him that gave it: "but," said he, "God is great, who hateth that conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us." And when he had used these words to Zedekiah, he commanded his sons and his friends to be slain, while Zedekiah and the rest of the captains looked on; after which he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him, and carried him to Babylon. And these things happened to him, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold to him, that he should be caught, and brought before the king of Babylon, and should speak to him face to

face, and should see his eyes with his own eyes; and thus far did Jeremiah prophesy. But he was also made blind, and brought to Babylon but did not see it, according to the prediction of Ezekiel.

Jerusalem Is Burned

(2 Ki 25:8-9 NIV) On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down.

The Temple Is Looted And Destroyed

(2 Ki 25:13-17 NIV) The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried the bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls--all that were made of pure gold or silver. The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed. Each pillar was twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was four and a half feet high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.

The Top Officials of Zedekiah's Government Are Also Executed

(2 Ki 25:18-21 NIV) The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of his men who were found in the city. Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed. So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

Gedaliah is Appointed Governor of Judea Under Assyrian Domination

(2 Ki 25:22-24 NIV) Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah--Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, and their men. Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."

(Jer 39:10 NIV) But Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people, who owned nothing; and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields.

(2 Ki 25:12 NIV) But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

The Reign Of Kings Of David's Line Ends In Jerusalem

Again, just like the prophecies concerning Zedekiah, some of the people and the kings advisors thought that Jerusalem could never be conquered and the line of kings from David's descendants ruling in Jerusalem could never end until the Messiah would come. They believed they could sin, worship idols and do every sort of evil and that God could never punish them for it because of the promises he made to David. They did not realize that God had never said that David would never lack for a descendant ruling on a throne in Jerusalem. God had said only that David would never lack for a descendant ruling of the people of Israel. That could and did happen anywhere in the world. By the time Jerusalem was destroyed there were already descendants of David ruling over Israelites who were carried off into captivity by the Assyrians more than a hundred years before. God always keeps his word, but not always in the way we expect it to be carried out.

This should serve as a note of caution for those who study future prophecy. There are many books and movies out today concerning the end times, the Antichrist, and the tribulation period. Every one of them, including my own, is just a guess as to how God will fulfill his word. Do not be disheartened or disappointed or lose your faith if things do not unfold in the future as today's prophecy writers have suggested they might. God will fulfill his word to the letter, but undoubtedly some surprises are in store for us all. The only interpreters of prophecy that we can trust with 100% accuracy will be

Enoch and Elijah, the Two Witnesses, when they get here. Until then be open minded about future prophetic fulfillment possibilities.

The End of the Davidic Dynasty In Jerusalem According To Josephus

Josephus gives us a more detailed report of the end of the kingship through David's line in Jerusalem.

Josephus Chapter 8

And after this manner have the kings of David's race ended their lives, being in number twenty-one, until, the last king, who all together reigned five hundred and fourteen years, and six months, and ten days: of whom Saul, who was their first king, retained the government twenty years, though he was not of the same tribe with the rest.

And now it was that the king of Babylon sent Nebuzaradan, the general of his army, to Jerusalem, to pillage the temple; who had it also in command to burn it and the royal palace, and to lay the city even with the ground, and to transplant the people into Babylon.

Now the temple was burnt four hundred and seventy years, six months, and ten days, after it was built. It was then one thousand and sixty-two years, six months, and ten days, from the departure out of Egypt;

Jeremiah Is Given His Freedom By Nebuchadnezzar

(Jer 39:11-14 NIV) Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard: "Take him and look after him; don't harm him but do for him whatever he asks." So Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard, Nebushazban a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer a high official and all the other officers of the king of Babylon sent and had Jeremiah taken out of the courtyard of the guard. They turned him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him back to his home. So he remained among his own people.

Ebed-Melech, Who Rescued Jeremiah From A Pit Is Given Protection From God

(Jer 39:15-18 NIV) While Jeremiah had been confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him: "Go and tell Ebed-Melech

the Cushite, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am about to fulfill my words against this city through disaster, not prosperity. At that time they will be fulfilled before your eyes. But I will rescue you on that day, declares the LORD; you will not be handed over to those you fear. I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the LORD.'

Here are the details of what Ebed-Melech did for the prophet Jeremiah.

(Jer 38:-75 NIV) "He is in your hands," King Zedekiah answered. "The king can do nothing to oppose you." So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate,

(Jer 38:11-13 NIV) So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went to a room under the treasury in the palace. He took some old rags and worn-out clothes from there and let them down with ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern. Ebed-Melech the Cushite said to Jeremiah, "Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes." Jeremiah did so, and they pulled him up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the courtyard of the guard.

The life of Ebed-Melech was spared during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem because of his concern for God's prophet Jeremiah. Ebed was afraid of the king of Babylon because all of the other officials of the king, of which Ebed was one of them, had been slaughtered at Riblah by the Babylonian soldiers. God gave Ebed-Melech grace because of his kindness towards Jeremiah. We are reminded of the Psalm below.

(Psa 34:19 KJV) Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

The Land Enjoys Rest For Seventy Years While The Jews Are In Babylon

(2 Chr 36:20-21 NIV) He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were

completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

(2 Chr 36:22 NIV) In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

(2 Chr 36:23 NIV) "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up."

Chapter 14: Tobit And Raphael: From The Book Of Tobit

The book of Tobit is contained in the Greek and Catholic bibles but not in the protestant bibles. Since some may be unfamiliar with it we will present the entire book here because it contains much information concerning how the angels intervene in the affairs of men and are used by God to bless the righteous.

The book of Tobit is primarily a love story, but many other lessons are there for the learning if one can discern them. If you have never read the book of Tobit, read it and be blessed. If you have read it enjoy its comforting message again that God sends his angels to watch over his people for their good, even in times of extreme trial.

Tobit 1:1-2 This book tells the story of Tobit son of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Aduel son Of Gabael son of Raphael son of Raguel of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali, who in the days of King Shalmaneser of the Assyrians was taken into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the south of Kedesh Naphtali in Upper Galilee, above Asher toward the west, and north of Phogor.

Tobit's Youth and Virtuous Life

Tobit 1:3-9 I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians. When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem. This city had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes of Israel should offer sacrifice and where the temple, the dwelling of God, had been consecrated and established for all generations forever.

All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee. But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep. I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar; likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the fruits to the sons of

Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. Also for six years I would save up a second tenth in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem. A third tenth I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan. When I became a man I married a woman, a member of our own family, and by her I became the father of a son whom I named Tobias.

Tobit practiced the triple tithe, one for the Priests and Levites, one for distribution in Jerusalem, and one for alms to give to widows and orphans.

Taken Captive to Nineveh

Tobit 1:10-15 After I was carried away captive to Assyria and came as a captive to Nineveh, everyone of my kindred and my people ate the food of the Gentiles, but I kept myself from eating the food of the Gentiles. Because I was mindful of God with all my heart, the Most High gave me favor and good standing with Shalmaneser, and I used to buy everything he needed. Until his death I used to go into Media, and buy for him there. While in the country of Media I left bags of silver worth ten talents in trust with Gabael, the brother of Gabri. But when Shalmaneser died, and his son Sennacherib reigned in his place, the highways into Media became unsafe and I could no longer go there.

Courage in Burying the Dead

Tobit 1:16-20 In the days of Shalmaneser I performed many acts of charity to my kindred, those of my tribe. I would give my food to the hungry and my clothing to the naked; and if I saw the dead body of any of my people thrown out behind the wall of Nineveh, I would bury it. I also buried any whom King Sennacherib put to death when he came fleeing from Judea in those days of judgment that the king of heaven executed upon him because of his blasphemies. For in his anger he put to death many Israelites; but I would secretly remove the bodies and bury them. So when Sennacherib looked for them he could not find them. Then one of the Ninevites went and informed the king about me, that I was burying them; so I hid myself. But when I realized that the king knew about me and that I was being searched for to be put to death, I was afraid and ran away. Then all my property was confiscated; nothing was left to me that was not taken into the royal treasury except my wife Anna and my son Tobias.

Tobit 1:21-24 But not forty days passed before two of Sennacherib's sons killed him, and they fled to the mountains of Ararat, and his son Esarhaddon reigned after him. He appointed Ahikar, the son of my brother Hanael over all the accounts of his kingdom, and he had authority over the entire administration. Ahikar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esarhaddon reappointed him. He was my nephew and so a close relative.

Tobit 2:1-6 Then during the reign of Esarhaddon I returned home, and my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me. At our festival of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of weeks, a good dinner was prepared for me and I reclined to eat. When the table was set for me and an abundance of food placed before me, I said to my son Tobias, "Go, my child, and bring whatever poor person you may find of our people among the exiles in Nineveh, who is wholeheartedly mindful of God, and he shall eat together with me. I will wait for you, until you come back." So Tobias went to look for some poor person of our people. When he had returned he said, "Father!" And I replied, "Here I am, my child." Then he went on to say, "Look, father, one of our own people has been murdered and thrown into the market place, and now he lies there strangled." Then I sprang up, left the dinner before even tasting it, and removed the body from the square and laid it in one of the rooms until sunset when I might bury it. When I returned, I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow. Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Bethel, "Your festivals shall be turned into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation." And I wept.

Tobit Becomes Blind

Tobit 2:7-10 When the sun had set, I went and dug a grave and buried him. And my neighbors laughed and said, "Is he still not afraid? He has already been hunted down to be put to death for doing this, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead!" That same night I washed myself and went into my courtyard and slept by the wall of the courtyard; and my face was uncovered because of the heat. I did not know that there were sparrows on the wall; their fresh droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films. I went to physicians to be healed, but the more they treated me with ointments the more my vision was obscured by the white films, until I became completely blind. For four years I remained unable to see. All my kindred were sorry for me, and Ahikar took care of me for two years before he went to Elymais.

Tobit's Wife Earns Their Livelihood

Tobit 2:11-14 At that time, also, my wife Anna earned money at women's work. She used to send what she made to the owners and they would pay wages to her. One day, the seventh of Dystrus, when she cut off a piece she had woven and sent it to the owners, they paid her full wages and also gave her a young goat for a meal. When she returned to me, the goat began to bleat. So I called her and said, "Where did you get this goat? It is surely not stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen." But she said to me, "It was given to me as a gift in addition to my wages." But I did not believe her, and told her to return it to the owners. I became flushed with anger against her over this. Then she replied to me, "Where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds? These things are known about you!"

Tobit Prays For Death

Tobit had served God all of his life and given tithes and offerings and refused to worship the idols and the Baals and the Ashtoreth's like many of the Israelites. He had always maintained his integrity. Now his whole life had come apart at the seams. He was carried off into captivity to Assyria, He went blind, all of his money had been confiscated by the king who wished to kill him, his wife was supporting the family, and on top of all that he was an object of scorn and ridicule to all the people around him. The people said, what good did it do for him to serve God all his life? He is in the most miserable condition now. His God has deserted him or does not exist. It is now wonder Tobit prayed for death. How many of us have wished for the same with even less problems than Tobit.

Tobit 3:1-6 Then with much grief and anguish of heart I wept, and with groaning began to pray: "You are righteous, O Lord, and all your deeds are just; all your ways are mercy and truth; you judge the world. And now, O Lord, remember me and look favorably upon me. Do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offenses and those that my ancestors committed before you. They sinned against you, and disobeyed your commandments. So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death, to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us. And now your many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins. For we have not kept your commandments and have not walked in accordance with truth before you. So now deal with me as you will; command my spirit to be taken from me, so that I may be

released from the face of the earth and become dust. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have had to listen to undeserved insults, and great is the sorrow within me. Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress; release me to go to the eternal home, and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me. For it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life and to listen to insults.”

Sarah Falsely Accused

Tobit 3:7-9 On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by one of her father’s maids. For she had been married to seven husbands, and the wicked demon Asmodeus had killed each of them before they had been with her as is customary for wives. So the maid said to her, “You are the one who kills your husbands! See, you have already been married to seven husbands and have not borne the name of a single one of them. Why do you beat us? Because your husbands are dead? Go with them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!”

Sarah Prays for Death

Raguel’s daughter Sarah also wished for death. The shame of being married seven times and having every husband die before the marriage was completed was almost more than she could bear. It is possible that the Sadducees in Jesus day used her experience as their basis for questioning Jesus about marriage in Heaven. Of course some of the details were changed to lend support to proving their point, which they did not do.

(Luke 20:27-33 NIV) Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

We Will Be like The Angels After The Resurrection

(Luke 20:34-36 NIV) Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be

given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

(Luke 20:37-38 NIV) But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Tobit 3:10-15 On that day she was grieved in spirit and wept. When she had gone up to her father's upper room, she intended to hang herself. But she thought it over and said, "Never shall they reproach my father, saying to him, 'You had only one beloved daughter but she hanged herself because of her distress.' And I shall bring my father in his old age down in sorrow to Hades. It is better for me not to hang myself, but to pray the Lord that I may die and not listen to these reproaches anymore." At that same time, with hands outstretched toward the window, she prayed and said, "Blessed are you, merciful God! Blessed is your name forever; let all your works praise you forever. And now, Lord, I turn my face to you, and raise my eyes toward you. Command that I be released from the earth and not listen to such reproaches any more. You know, O Master, that I am innocent of any defilement with a man, and that I have not disgraced my name or the name of my father in the land of my exile. I am my father's only child; he has no other child to be his heir; and he has no close relative or other kindred for whom I should keep myself as wife. Already seven husbands of mine have died. Why should I still live? But if it is not pleasing to you, O Lord, to take my life, hear me in my disgrace."

The Angel Raphael Is Sent To Answer Their Prayers

Tobit 3:16-17 At that very moment, the prayers of both of them were heard in the glorious presence of God. So Raphael was sent to heal both of them: Tobit, by removing the white films from his eyes, so that he might see God's light with his eyes; and Sarah, daughter of Raguel, by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit, and by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodeus. For Tobias was entitled to have her before all others who had desired to marry her. At the same time that Tobit returned from the courtyard into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel came down from her upper room.

Tobit Gives Instructions to His Son

Tobit 4:1-4 That same day Tobit remembered the money that he had left in

trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself, “Now I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobias and explain to him about the money before I die?” Then he called his son Tobias, and when he came to him he said, “My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honor your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her in anything. Remember her, my son, because she faced many dangers for you while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave.

Tobit 4:5-11 ‘Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing; for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

Tobit 4:12-13 “Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father’s tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. So now, my son, love your kindred, and in your heart do not disdain your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them. For in pride there is ruin and great confusion. And in idleness there is loss and dire poverty, because idleness is the mother of famine.

Tobit 4:14-19 “Do not keep over until the next day the wages of those who work for you, but pay them at once. If you serve God you will receive payment. Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and discipline yourself in all your conduct. And what you hate, do not do to anyone. Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way. Give some of your food to the hungry, and some of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus as alms, and do not let your eye begrudge your giving

of alms. Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners. Seek advice from every wise person and do not despise any useful counsel. At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding, but the Lord himself will give them good counsel; but if he chooses otherwise, he casts down to deepest Hades. So now, my child, remember these commandments, and do not let them be erased from your heart.

Money Left in Trust with Gabael

Tobit 4:20-21 “And now, my son, let me explain to you that I left ten talents of silver in trust with Gabael son of Gabrias, at Rages in Media. Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and flee from every sin and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God.”

The Angel Raphael

Tobit 5:1-3 Then Tobias answered his father Tobit, “I will do everything that you have commanded me, father; but how can I obtain the money from him, since he does not know me and I do not know him? What evidence am I to give him so that he will recognize and trust me, and give me the money? Also, I do not know the roads to Media, or how to get there.” Then Tobit answered his son Tobias, “He gave me his bond and I gave him my bond. I divided his in two; we each took one part, and I put one with the money. And now twenty years have passed since I left this money in trust. So now, my son, find yourself a trustworthy man to go with you, and we will pay him wages until you return. But get back the money from Gabael.”

Tobit Entertains An Angel Unawares

(Heb 13:2 KJV) Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

In the bible it says that some have entertained angels unknowingly. The father of Tobias, Tobit requested his son to find a guide to go with him to another city to conduct some financial business, and the young man agreed to do so. The person he found to go along with him was, unknown to Tobias, Raphael the archangel.

Tobit 5:4 So Tobias went out to look for a man to go with him to Media,

someone who was acquainted with the way. He went out and found the angel Raphael standing in front of him; but he did not perceive that he was an angel of God.

Tobit 5:5-8 Tobias said to him, "Where do you come from, young man?" "From your kindred, the Israelites," he replied, "and I have come here to work." Then Tobias said to him, "Do you know the way to go to Media?" "Yes," he replied, "I have been there many times; I am acquainted with it and know all the roads. I have often traveled to Media, and would stay with our kinsman Gabael who lives in Rages of Media. It is a journey of two days from Ecbatana to Rages; for it lies in a mountainous area, while Ecbatana is in the middle of the plain." Then Tobias said to him, "Wait for me, young man, until I go in and tell my father; for I do need you to travel with me, and I will pay you your wages." He replied, "All right, I will wait; but do not take too long."

Tobit 5:9-10 So Tobias went in to tell his father Tobit and said to him, "I have just found a man who is one of our own Israelite kindred!" He replied, "Call the man in, my son, so that I may learn about his family and to what tribe he belongs, and whether he is trustworthy enough to go with you." Then Tobias went out and called him, and said, "Young man, my father is calling for you." So he went in to him, and Tobit greeted him first. He replied, "Joyous greetings to you!" But Tobit retorted, "What joy is left for me any more? I am a man without eyesight; I cannot see the light of heaven, but I lie in darkness like the dead who no longer see the light. Although still alive, I am among the dead. I hear people but I cannot see them." But the young man said, "Take courage; the time is near for God to heal you; take courage."

Tobit 5:10-14 Then Tobit said to him, "My son Tobias wishes to go to Media. Can you accompany him and guide him? I will pay your wages, brother." He answered, "I can go with him and I know all the roads, for I have often gone to Media and have crossed all its plains, and I am familiar with its mountains and all of its roads." Then Tobit said to him, "Brother, of what family are you and from what tribe? Tell me, brother." He replied, "Why do you need to know my tribe?" But Tobit said, "I want to be sure, brother, whose son you are and what your name is." He replied, "I am Azariah, the son of the great Hananiah, one of your relatives." Then Tobit said to him, "Welcome! God save you, brother. Do not feel bitter toward me, brother, because I wanted to be sure about your ancestry. It turns out that you are a kinsman, and of good and noble lineage. For I knew Hananiah and Nathan, the two sons of Shemeliah, and they used to go with

me to Jerusalem and worshiped with me there, and were not led astray. Your kindred are good people; you come of good stock. Hearty welcome!”

Tobit 5:15-17 Then he added, “I will pay you a drachma a day as wages, as well as expenses for yourself and my son. So go with my son, and I will add something to your wages.” Raphael answered, “I will go with him; so do not fear. We shall leave in good health and return to you in good health, because the way is safe.” So Tobit said to him, “Blessings be upon you, brother.” Then he called his son and said to him, “Son, prepare supplies for the journey and set out with your brother. May God in heaven bring you safely there and return you in good health to me; and may his angel, my son, accompany you both for your safety.” Before he went out to start his journey, he kissed his father and mother. Tobit then said to him, “Have a safe journey.”

Tobit 5:18-21 But his mother began to weep, and said to Tobit, “Why is it that you have sent my child away? Is he not the staff of our hand as he goes in and out before us? Do not heap money upon money, but let it be a ransom for our child. For the life that is given to us by the Lord is enough for us.” Tobit said to her, “Do not worry; our child will leave in good health and return to us in good health. Your eyes will see him on the day when he returns to you in good health. Say no more! Do not fear for them, my sister. For a good angel will accompany him; his journey will be successful, and he will come back in good health.” So she stopped weeping.

Tobit even with all that had befallen him, had faith that a good angel would accompany his son on the journey. Unaware to Tobit a good angel was already accompanying his son, the angel Raphael.

Journey to Rages

Tobit 6:1-2 The young man went out and the angel went with him; and the dog came out with him and went along with them. So they both journeyed along, and when the first night overtook them they camped by the Tigris river.

Tobias Catches A Fish

On the journey they caught a fish and Raphael instructed Tobias to keep certain parts of the fish to use for a healing potion and to drive away demons. This was obviously a special fish prepared by God for this purpose.

Tobit 6:3-6 Then the young man went down to wash his feet in the Tigris river. Suddenly a large fish leaped up from the water and tried to swallow the young man's foot, and he cried out. But the angel said to the young man, "Catch hold of the fish and hang on to it!" So the young man grasped the fish and drew it up on the land. Then the angel said to him, "Cut open the fish and take out its gall, heart, and liver. Keep them with you, but throw away the intestines. For its gall, heart, and liver are useful as medicine." So after cutting open the fish the young man gathered together the gall, heart, and liver; then he roasted and ate some of the fish, and kept some to be salted. The two continued on their way together until they were near Media.

Tobit 6:7-9 Then the young man questioned the angel and said to him, "Brother Azariah, what medicinal value is there in the fish's heart and liver, and in the gall?" He replied, "As for the fish's heart and liver, you must burn them to make a smoke in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, and every affliction will flee away and never remain with that person any longer. And as for the gall, anoint a person's eyes where white films have appeared on them; blow upon them, upon the white films, and the eyes will be healed."

Raphael's Instructions

Tobit 6:10-13 When he entered Media and already was approaching Ecbatana, Raphael said to the young man, "Brother Tobias." "Here I am," he answered. Then Raphael said to him, "We must stay this night in the home of Raguel. He is your relative, and he has a daughter named Sarah. He has no male heir and no daughter except Sarah only, and you, as next of kin to her, have before all other men a hereditary claim on her. Also it is right for you to inherit her father's possessions. Moreover, the girl is sensible, brave, and very beautiful, and her father is a good man." He continued, "You have every right to take her in marriage. So listen to me, brother; tonight I will speak to her father about the girl, so that we may take her to be your bride. When we return from Rages we will celebrate her marriage. For I know that Raguel can by no means keep her from you or promise her to another man without incurring the penalty of death according to the decree of the book of Moses. Indeed he knows that you, rather than any other man, are entitled to marry his daughter. So now listen to me, brother, and tonight we shall speak concerning the girl and arrange her engagement to you. And when we return from Rages we will take her and bring her back with us to your house."

Tobit 6:14-15 Then Tobias said in answer to Raphael, “Brother Azariah, I have heard that she already has been married to seven husbands and that they died in the bridal chamber. On the night when they went in to her, they would die. I have heard people saying that it was a demon that killed them. It does not harm her, but it kills anyone who desires to approach her. So now, since I am the only son my father has, I am afraid that I may die and bring my father’s and mother’s life down to their grave, grieving for me—and they have no other son to bury them.”

A Marriage Made In Heaven

Tobit 6:16-21 But Raphael said to him, “Do you not remember your father’s orders when he commanded you to take a wife from your father’s house? Now listen to me, brother, and say no more about this demon. Take her. I know that this very night she will be given to you in marriage. When you enter the bridal chamber, take some of the fish’s liver and heart, and put them on the embers of the incense. An odor will be given off; the demon will smell it and flee, and will never be seen near her any more. Now when you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, imploring the Lord of heaven that mercy and safety may be granted to you. Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made. You will save her, and she will go with you. I presume that you will have children by her, and they will be as brothers to you. Now say no more!” When Tobias heard the words of Raphael and learned that she was his kinswoman, related through his father’s lineage, he loved her very much, and his heart was drawn to her.

Arrival at Home of Raguel

Tobit 7:1-8 Now when they entered Ecbatana, Tobias said to him, “Brother Azariah, take me straight to our brother Raguel.” So he took him to Raguel’s house, where they found him sitting beside the courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he replied, “Joyous greetings, brothers; welcome and good health!” Then he brought them into his house. He said to his wife Edna, “How much the young man resembles my kinsman Tobit!” Then Edna questioned them, saying, “Where are you from, brothers?” They answered, “We belong to the descendants of Naphtali who are exiles in Nineveh.” She said to them, “Do you know our kinsman Tobit?” And they replied, “Yes, we know him.” Then she asked them, “Is he in good health?” They replied, “He is alive and in good health.” And Tobias added, “He is my father!” At that Raguel jumped up and kissed him and wept. He also spoke to him as follows, “Blessings on you, my child, son of a good and noble

father! O most miserable of calamities that such an upright and beneficent man has become blind!" He then embraced his kinsman Tobias and wept. His wife Edna also wept for him, and their daughter Sarah likewise wept. Then Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and received them very warmly.

Marriage of Tobias and Sarah

Tobit 7:9-11 When they had bathed and washed themselves and had reclined to dine, Tobias said to Raphael, "Brother Azariah, ask Raguel to give me my kinswoman Sarah." But Raguel overheard it and said to the lad, "Eat and drink, and be merry tonight. For no one except you, brother, has the right to marry my daughter Sarah. Likewise I am not at liberty to give her to any other man than yourself, because you are my nearest relative. But let me explain to you the true situation more fully, my child. I have given her to seven men of our kinsmen, and all died on the night when they went in to her. But now, my child, eat and drink, and the Lord will act on behalf of you both." But Tobias said, "I will neither eat nor drink anything until you settle the things that pertain to me." So Raguel said, "I will do so. She is given to you in accordance with the decree in the book of Moses, and it has been decreed from heaven that she be given to you. Take your kinswoman; from now on you are her brother and she is your sister. She is given to you from today and forever. May the Lord of heaven, my child, guide and prosper you both this night and grant you mercy and peace."

A Written Home Marriage Contract

Tobit 7:12-14 Then Raguel summoned his daughter Sarah. When she came to him he took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias, saying, "Take her to be your wife in accordance with the law and decree written in the book of Moses. Take her and bring her safely to your father. And may the God of heaven prosper your journey with his peace." Then he called her mother and told her to bring writing material; and he wrote out a copy of a marriage contract, to the effect that he gave her to him as wife according to the decree of the law of Moses. Then they began to eat and drink.

Tobit 7:15 Raguel called his wife Edna and said to her, "Sister, get the other room ready, and take her there." So she went and made the bed in the room as he had told her, and brought Sarah there. She wept for her daughter. Then, wiping away the tears, she said to her, "Take courage, my daughter; the Lord of heaven grant you joy in place of your sorrow. Take

courage, my daughter.” Then she went out.

Tobias Routs the Demon

Tobit 8:1-3 When they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to retire; so they took the young man and brought him into the bedroom. Then Tobias remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish’s liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. The odor of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest parts of Egypt. But Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot.

Tobias And Sarah Pray

Tobit 8:4-5 When the parents had gone out and shut the door of the room, Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah, “Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety.” So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying,

Tobit 8:6-9 “Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors, and blessed is your name in all generations forever. Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you forever. You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the human race has sprung. You said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.’ I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together.” And they both said, “Amen, Amen.” Then they went to sleep for the night.

Raguel Prepares A Grave

Tobit 8:10-13 But Raguel arose and called his servants to him, and they went and dug a grave, for he said, “It is possible that he will die and we will become an object of ridicule and derision.” When they had finished digging the grave, Raguel went into his house and called his wife, saying, “Send one of the maids and have her go in to see if he is alive. But if he is dead, let us bury him without anyone knowing it.” So they sent the maid, lit a lamp, and opened the door; and she went in and found them sound asleep together.

Tobit 8:14-18 Then the maid came out and informed them that he was alive

and that nothing was wrong. So they blessed the God of heaven, and Raguel said, “Blessed are you, O God, with every pure blessing; let all your chosen ones bless you. Let them bless you forever. Blessed are you because you have made me glad. It has not turned out as I expected, but you have dealt with us according to your great mercy. Blessed are you because you had compassion on two only children. Be merciful to them, O Master, and keep them safe; bring their lives to fulfillment in happiness and mercy.” Then he ordered his servants to fill in the grave before daybreak.

Wedding Feast

Tobit 8:19-21 After this he asked his wife to bake many loaves of bread; and he went out to the herd and brought two steers and four rams and ordered them to be slaughtered. So they began to make preparations. Then he called for Tobias and swore on oath to him in these words: “You shall not leave here for fourteen days, but shall stay here eating and drinking with me; and you shall cheer up my daughter, who has been depressed. Take at once half of what I own and return in safety to your father; the other half will be yours when my wife and I die. Take courage, my child. I am your father and Edna is your mother, and we belong to you as well as to your wife now and forever. Take courage, my child.”

The Money Recovered

Tobit 9:1-6 Then Tobias called Raphael and said to him, “Brother Azariah, take four servants and two camels with you and travel to Rages. Go to the home of Gabael, give him the bond, get the money, and then bring him with you to the wedding celebration. For you know that my father must be counting the days, and if I delay even one day I will upset him very much. You are witness to the oath Raguel has sworn, and I cannot violate his oath.” So Raphael with the four servants and two camels went to Rages in Media and stayed with Gabael. Raphael gave him the bond and informed him that Tobit’s son Tobias had married and was inviting him to the wedding celebration. So Gabael got up and counted out to him the money bags, with their seals intact; then they loaded them on the camels. In the morning they both got up early and went to the wedding celebration. When they came into Raguel’s house they found Tobias reclining at table. He sprang up and greeted Gabael, who wept and blessed him with the words, “Good and noble son of a father good and noble, upright and generous! May the Lord grant the blessing of heaven to you and your wife, and to your wife’s father and mother. Blessed be God, for I see in Tobias the very image of my cousin Tobit.”

Anxiety of the Parents

Tobit 10:1-6 Now, day by day, Tobit kept counting how many days Tobias would need for going and for returning. And when the days had passed and his son did not appear, he said, "Is it possible that he has been detained? Or that Gabael has died, and there is no one to give him the money?" And he began to worry. His wife Anna said, "My child has perished and is no longer among the living." And she began to weep and mourn for her son, saying, "Woe to me, my child, the light of my eyes, that I let you make the journey." But Tobit kept saying to her, "Be quiet and stop worrying, my dear; he is all right. Probably something unexpected has happened there. The man who went with him is trustworthy and is one of our own kin. Do not grieve for him, my dear; he will soon be here." She answered him, "Be quiet yourself! Stop trying to deceive me! My child has perished." She would rush out every day and watch the road her son had taken, and would heed no one. When the sun had set she would go in and mourn and weep all night long, getting no sleep at all.

Tobias and Sarah Start for Home

Tobit 10:1-13 Now when the fourteen days of the wedding celebration had ended that Raguel had sworn to observe for his daughter, Tobias came to him and said, "Send me back, for I know that my father and mother do not believe that they will see me again. So I beg of you, father, to let me go so that I may return to my own father. I have already explained to you how I left him." But Raguel said to Tobias, "Stay, my child, stay with me; I will send messengers to your father Tobit and they will inform him about you." But he said, "No! I beg you to send me back to my father." So Raguel promptly gave Tobias his wife Sarah, as well as half of all his property: male and female slaves, oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels, clothing, money, and household goods. Then he saw them safely off; he embraced Tobias and said, "Farewell, my child; have a safe journey. The Lord of heaven prosper you and your wife Sarah, and may I see children of yours before I die." Then he kissed his daughter Sarah and said to her, "My daughter, honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, since from now on they are as much your parents as those who gave you birth. Go in peace, daughter, and may I hear a good report about you as long as I live." Then he bade them farewell and let them go. Then Edna said to Tobias, "My child and dear brother, the Lord of heaven bring you back safely, and may I live long enough to see children of you and of my daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you; do

nothing to grieve her all the days of your life. Go in peace, my child. From now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we all prosper together all the days of our lives.” Then she kissed them both and saw them safely off. Tobias parted from Raguel with happiness and joy, praising the Lord of heaven and earth, King over all, because he had made his journey a success. Finally, he blessed Raguel and his wife Edna, and said, “I have been commanded by the Lord to honor you all the days of my life.”

Homeward Journey

Tobit 11:1-6 When they came near to Kaserin, which is opposite Nineveh, Raphael said, “You are aware of how we left your father. Let us run ahead of your wife and prepare the house while they are still on the way.” As they went on together Raphael said to him, “Have the gall ready.” And the dog went along behind them. Meanwhile Anna sat looking intently down the road by which her son would come. When she caught sight of him coming, she said to his father, “Look, your son is coming, and the man who went with him!”

Tobit’s Sight Restored

Tobit 11:7-15 Raphael said to Tobias, before he had approached his father, “I know that his eyes will be opened. Smear the gall of the fish on his eyes; the medicine will make the white films shrink and peel off from his eyes, and your father will regain his sight and see the light.” Then Anna ran up to her son and threw her arms around him, saying, “Now that I have seen you, my child, I am ready to die.” And she wept. Then Tobit got up and came stumbling out through the courtyard door. Tobias went up to him, with the gall of the fish in his hand, and holding him firmly, he blew into his eyes, saying, “Take courage, father.” With this he applied the medicine on his eyes, and it made them smart. Next, with both his hands he peeled off the white films from the corners of his eyes. Then Tobit saw his son and threw his arms around him, and he wept and said to him, “I see you, my son, the light of my eyes!” Then he said, “Blessed be God, and blessed be his great name, and blessed be all his holy angels. May his holy name be blessed throughout all the ages. Though he afflicted me, he has had mercy upon me. Now I see my son Tobias!”

Tobit 11:16-18 So Tobit went in rejoicing and praising God at the top of his voice. Tobias reported to his father that his journey had been successful, that he had brought the money, that he had married Raguel’s daughter

Sarah, and that she was, indeed, on her way there, very near to the gate of Nineveh. Then Tobit, rejoicing and praising God, went out to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate of Nineveh. When the people of Nineveh saw him coming, walking along in full vigor and with no one leading him, they were amazed. Before them all, Tobit acknowledged that God had been merciful to him and had restored his sight. When Tobit met Sarah the wife of his son Tobias, he blessed her saying, "Come in, my daughter, and welcome. Blessed be your God who has brought you to us, my daughter. Blessed be your father and your mother, blessed be my son Tobias, and blessed be you, my daughter. Come in now to your home, and welcome, with blessing and joy. Come in, my daughter." So on that day there was rejoicing among all the Jews who were in Nineveh. Ahikar and his nephew Nadab were also present to share Tobit's joy. With merriment they celebrated Tobias's wedding feast for seven days, and many gifts were given to him.

Raphael's Wages

Tobit 12:1-5 When the wedding celebration was ended, Tobit called his son Tobias and said to him, "My child, see to paying the wages of the man who went with you, and give him a bonus as well." He replied, "Father, how much shall I pay him? It would do no harm to give him half of the possessions brought back with me. For he has led me back to you safely, he cured my wife, he brought the money back with me, and he healed you. How much extra shall I give him as a bonus?" Tobit said, "He deserves, my child, to receive half of all that he brought back." So Tobias called him and said, "Take for your wages half of all that you brought back, and farewell."

Raphael's Exhortation

Tobit 11:5:6-10 Then Raphael called the two of them privately and said to them, "Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honor declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him. It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to acknowledge and reveal the works of God, and with fitting honor to acknowledge him. Do good and evil will not overtake you. Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies.

Raphael Discloses His Identity

Tobit 11:11-15 “I will now declare the whole truth to you and will conceal nothing from you. Already I have declared it to you when I said, ‘It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to reveal with due honor the works of God.’ So now when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you would bury the dead. And that time when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner to go and bury the dead, I was sent to you to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord.”

Tobit 11:16-22 The two of them were shaken; they fell face down, for they were afraid. But he said to them, “Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God forevermore. As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises. Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything—but what you saw was a vision. So now get up from the ground, and acknowledge God. See, I am ascending to him who sent me. Write down all these things that have happened to you.” And he ascended. Then they stood up, and could see him no more. They kept blessing God and singing his praises, and they acknowledged God for these marvelous deeds of his, when an angel of God had appeared to them.

In the verses above it is made clear that the angels, even the archangels, can do nothing unless it is permitted by the will of God. The angels cannot take matters into their own hands without sinning, as some did and became Satan’s fallen angels. Therefore there is no benefit to praying to the angels directly. We must pray to God the Father through Jesus Christ and in accordance to the will of God revealed in the Bible for any petition we desire to be answered. Then God the Father must permit the angels to assist us in whatever we desire and then they are free to help us.

(1 Tim 2:5 NIV) For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

(Rev 22:8-9 NIV) I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of

all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Tobit's Thanksgiving to God

Tobit 13:1-17 Then Tobit said: "Blessed be God who lives forever, because his kingdom lasts throughout all ages. For he afflicts, and he shows mercy; he leads down to Hades in the lowest regions of the earth, and he brings up from the great abyss, and there is nothing that can escape his hand. Acknowledge him before the nations, O children of Israel; for he has scattered you among them. He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God forever. He will afflict you for your iniquities, but he will again show mercy on all of you. He will gather you from all the nations among whom you have been scattered. If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul, to do what is true before him, then he will turn to you and will no longer hide his face from you. So now see what he has done for you; acknowledge him at the top of your voice. Bless the Lord of righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages. In the land of my exile I acknowledge him, and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners: 'Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right before him; perhaps he may look with favor upon you and show you mercy.' As for me, I exalt my God, and my soul rejoices in the King of heaven. Let all people speak of his majesty, and acknowledge him in Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, the holy city, he afflicted you for the deeds of your hands, but will again have mercy on the children of the righteous. Acknowledge the Lord, for he is good, and bless the King of the ages, so that his tent may be rebuilt in you in joy. May he cheer all those within you who are captives, and love all those within you who are distressed, to all generations forever. A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth; many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven. Generation after generation will give joyful praise in you; the name of the chosen city will endure forever. Cursed are all who speak a harsh word against you; cursed are all who conquer you and pull down your walls, all who overthrow your towers and set your homes on fire. But blessed forever will be all who revere you. Go, then, and rejoice over the children of the righteous, for they will be gathered together and will praise the Lord of the ages. Happy are those who love you, and happy are those who rejoice in your prosperity. Happy also are all people who grieve with you because of your afflictions; for they will rejoice with you and witness all your glory forever. My soul blesses the Lord, the great King! For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my

descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir. The gates of Jerusalem will sing hymns of joy, and all her houses will cry, 'Hallelujah! Blessed be the God of Israel!' and the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever."

Tobit's Final Counsel

Tobit 14:1-2 So ended Tobit's words of praise. Tobit died in peace when he was one hundred twelve years old, and was buried with great honor in Nineveh. He was sixty-two years old when he lost his eyesight, and after regaining it he lived in prosperity, giving alms and continually blessing God and acknowledging God's majesty.

Tobit 14:3-4 When he was about to die, he called his son Tobias and the seven sons of Tobias and gave this command: "My son, take your children and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh. Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times. So it will be safer in Media than in Assyria and Babylon. For I know and believe that whatever God has said will be fulfilled and will come true; not a single word of the prophecies will fail. All of our kindred, inhabitants of the land of Israel, will be scattered and taken as captives from the good land; and the whole land of Israel will be desolate, even Samaria and Jerusalem will be desolate. And the temple of God in it will be burned to the ground, and it will be desolate for a while.

Tobit 14:5-7 "But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God. All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety forever in the land of Abraham,

and it will be given over to them. Those who sincerely love God will rejoice, but those who commit sin and injustice will vanish from all the earth.

Tobit 14:8-11 So now, my children, I command you, serve God faithfully and do what is pleasing in his sight. Your children are also to be commanded to do what is right and to give alms, and to be mindful of God and to bless his name at all times with sincerity and with all their strength. So now, my son, leave Nineveh; do not remain here. On whatever day you bury your mother beside me, do not stay overnight within the confines of the city. For I see that there is much wickedness within it, and that much deceit is practiced within it, while the people are without shame. See, my son, what Nadab did to Ahikar who had reared him. Was he not, while still alive, brought down into the earth? For God repaid him to his face for this shameful treatment. Ahikar came out into the light, but Nadab went into the eternal darkness, because he tried to kill Ahikar. Because he gave alms, Ahikar escaped the fatal trap that Nadab had set for him, but Nadab fell into it himself, and was destroyed. So now, my children, see what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does—it brings death! But now my breath fails me.” Then they laid him on his bed, and he died; and he received an honorable funeral.

Death of Tobit and Anna

Tobit 14:12-15 When Tobias’s mother died, he buried her beside his father. Then he and his wife and children returned to Media and settled in Ecbatana with Raguel his father-in-law. He treated his parents-in-law with great respect in their old age, and buried them in Ecbatana of Media. He inherited both the property of Raguel and that of his father Tobit. He died highly respected at the age of one hundred seventeen years. Before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, and he saw its prisoners being led into Media, those whom King Cyaxares of Media had taken captive. Tobias praised God for all he had done to the people of Nineveh and Assyria; before he died he rejoiced over Nineveh, and he blessed the Lord God forever and ever. Amen.

Angels Are Our Protectors

Angels are our guides and protectors. In a moment of our time, even one second away from a car accident a prayer of “Jesus save me” can go up to heaven and back and the angel can be there in a millisecond to prevent serious injury. Not all prayers are answered instantly though as we all know. A life and death situation is high priority, if it is not answered

immediately the person praying would be dead. Other non life threatening situations seem to take a lot longer, sometimes years or even decades for prayers pertaining to healing, knowledge, finances, a spouse, the salvation of a loved one, etc.

(Col 2:18-19 NIV) Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

The bottom line is that angel worship equivalent to the sin of idolatry, but understanding how angels are involved in answering our prayers is desirable. It is like understanding how an automobile engine works. It is not necessary in order to drive a car, but for those who can visualize the inner workings of a high performance sports car as they open it up on a test track, it can be a lot more enjoyable. Again, that is the purpose of this study, for us to see and understand how angels are involved in answering our prayers, and we have learned a lot from the book of Tobit.

Chapter 15: Angels During The Exile

As we can see in this study so far, angels have been involved in the affairs of mankind every step of the way since God created man. They continue to be involved as Israel and Judah are in dispersion and in the regathering. Following that they were of course very involved in the New Testament as we shall see later. But, their greatest involvement in world affairs is yet to come. During the time just before the return of Christ there will be more angelic activity, both good and bad, than has ever been throughout the history of mankind. As exciting as it is to see what angels have done in the past it will be even more exciting to see what they will do in the future. Keep reading to find out.

Baruch and the Jews in Babylon

Baruch 1:1-4 These are the words of the book that Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah son of Zedekiah son of Hasadiah son of Hilkiyah wrote in Babylon, in the fifth year, on the seventh day of the month, at the time when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem and burned it with fire. Baruch read the words of this book to Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and to all the people who came to hear the book, and to the nobles and the princes, and to the elders, and to all the people, small and great, all who lived in Babylon by the river Sud. Then they wept, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord;

Confession of Sins

Baruch 1:15-20 And you shall say: The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us today, on the people of Judah, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on our kings, our rulers, our priests, our prophets, and our ancestors, because we have sinned before the Lord. We have disobeyed him, and have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us. From the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until today, we have been disobedient to the Lord our God, and we have been negligent, in not heeding his voice. So to this day there have clung to us the calamities and the curse that the Lord declared through his servant Moses at the time when he brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to give to us a land flowing with milk and honey. We did not listen to the voice of the Lord our God in all the words of the prophets whom he sent to us, but all of us followed the intent of our own wicked hearts by serving

other gods and doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God.

Baruch 2:1-5 So the Lord carried out the threat he spoke against us: against our judges who ruled Israel, and against our kings and our rulers and the people of Israel and Judah. Under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance with the threats that were written in the law of Moses. Some of us ate the flesh of their sons and others the flesh of their daughters. He made them subject to all the kingdoms around us, to be an object of scorn and a desolation among all the surrounding peoples, where the Lord has scattered them. They were brought down and not raised up, because our nation sinned against the Lord our God, in not heeding his voice.

Baruch 2:6-10 The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us and our ancestors this very day. All those calamities with which the Lord threatened us have come upon us. Yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord by turning away, each of us, from the thoughts of our wicked hearts. And the Lord has kept the calamities ready, and the Lord has brought them upon us, for the Lord is just in all the works that he has commanded us to do. Yet we have not obeyed his voice, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us.

God's Promise Recalled

Baruch 2:27-35 Yet you have dealt with us, O Lord our God, in all your kindness and in all your great compassion, as you spoke by your servant Moses on the day when you commanded him to write your law in the presence of the people of Israel, saying, "If you will not obey my voice, this very great multitude will surely turn into a small number among the nations, where I will scatter them. For I know that they will not obey me, for they are a stiff-necked people. But in the land of their exile they will come to themselves and know that I am the Lord their God. I will give them a heart that obeys and ears that hear; they will praise me in the land of their exile, and will remember my name and turn from their stubbornness and their wicked deeds; for they will remember the ways of their ancestors, who sinned before the Lord. I will bring them again into the land that I swore to give to their ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they will rule over it; and I will increase them, and they will not be diminished. I will make an everlasting covenant with them to be their God and they shall be my people; and I will never again remove my people Israel from the land that I have given them."

The Letter Of Jeremiah (Sometimes Called Chapter 6 Of Baruch)

EpJer 1:1 A copy of a letter that Jeremiah sent to those who were to be taken to Babylon as exiles by the king of the Babylonians, to give them the message that God had commanded him.

The People Face a Long Captivity

EpJer 1:2-6 Because of the sins that you have committed before God, you will be taken to Babylon as exiles by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians. Therefore when you have come to Babylon you will remain there for many years, for a long time, up to seven generations; after that I will bring you away from there in peace. Now in Babylon you will see gods made of silver and gold and wood, which people carry on their shoulders, and which cause the heathen to fear. So beware of becoming at all like the foreigners or of letting fear for these gods possess you when you see the multitude before and behind them worshipping them. But say in your heart, "It is you, O Lord, whom we must worship."

Even In The Dispersion The Angels Were Protecting God's People

EpJer 1:7 NRSV For my angel is with you, and he is watching over your lives.

EpJer 1:7 For mine angel is with you, and I myself caring for your souls.

2 Ezra (2 Esdras in The Greek Canon Of Scripture)

The future prophecy revealed by the archangel Uriel and contained in the book of 2 Esdras will be discussed and included with the end times prophecies of Revelation. In this chapter we will only deal with Ezra's questions pertaining the punishment of God's people and the questions pertaining to the fate of the righteous and the wicked.

The Genealogy of Ezra

2 Esdras 1:1-3 The book of the prophet Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Ahijah, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraimoth, son of Arna, son of Uzzi, son of Borith, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, who was a captive in the country of the Medes in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of the

Persians.

Ezra's Prophetic Call

2 Esdras 1:4-9 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Go, declare to my people their evil deeds, and to their children the iniquities that they have committed against me, so that they may tell their children's children that the sins of their parents have increased in them, for they have forgotten me and have offered sacrifices to strange gods. Was it not I who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage? But they have angered me and despised my counsels. Now you, pull out the hair of your head and hurl all evils upon them, for they have not obeyed my law—they are a rebellious people.

Ezra Sees The Son Of God And Speaks To An Angel

2 Esdras 1:42-48 I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a great multitude that I could not number, and they all were praising the Lord with songs. In their midst was a young man of great stature, taller than any of the others, and on the head of each of them he placed a crown, but he was more exalted than they. And I was held spellbound. Then I asked an angel, "Who are these, my lord?" He answered and said to me, "These are they who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God. Now they are being crowned, and receive palms." Then I said to the angel, "Who is that young man who is placing crowns on them and putting palms in their hands?" He answered and said to me, "He is the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world." So I began to praise those who had stood valiantly for the name of the Lord. Then the angel said to me, "Go, tell my people how great and how many are the wonders of the Lord God that you have seen."

Ezra's Prayer of Complaint

2 Esdras 3:1-2 In the thirtieth year after the destruction of the city, I was in Babylon—I, Salathiel, who am also called Ezra. I was troubled as I lay on my bed, and my thoughts welled up in my heart, because I saw the desolation of Zion and the wealth of those who lived in Babylon.

Babylon Compared with Zion

2 Esdras 3: 28-36 "Then I said in my heart, Are the deeds of those who inhabit Babylon any better? Is that why it has gained dominion over Zion?"

For when I came here I saw ungodly deeds without number, and my soul has seen many sinners during these thirty years. And my heart failed me, because I have seen how you endure those who sin, and have spared those who act wickedly, and have destroyed your people, and protected your enemies, and have not shown to anyone how your way may be comprehended. Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known you besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed the covenants as these tribes of Jacob? Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit. For I have traveled widely among the nations and have seen that they abound in wealth, though they are unmindful of your commandments. Now therefore weigh in a balance our iniquities and those of the inhabitants of the world; and it will be found which way the turn of the scale will incline. When have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in your sight? Or what nation has kept your commandments so well? You may indeed find individuals who have kept your commandments, but nations you will not find.”

Uriel The Archangel

The Archangel Uriel is prominently featured in the book of Esdras and seems to be at least one of the angels assigned to watch over the Israelites during their dispersion. Uriel's name means 'God is light', 'God's light', or 'Fire of God', or enlightener, because he illuminates situations and gives prophetic information and warnings. Perhaps because of his connection to Noah, and the weather elements of thunder and lightning, Uriel is considered an archangel who helps us with natural disasters. We pray for him to enlighten those with darkened minds.

The Angel Uriel Answers Ezra's Complaint

2 Esdras 4:1-4 Then the angel that had been sent to me, whose name was Uriel, answered and said to me, “Your understanding has utterly failed regarding this world, and do you think you can comprehend the way of the Most High?” Then I said, “Yes, my lord.” And he replied to me, “I have been sent to show you three ways, and to put before you three problems. If you can solve one of them for me, then I will show you the way you desire to see, and will teach you why the heart is evil.”

Limitations of the Human Mind

2 Esdras 4:5-12 I said, “Speak, my lord.” And he said to me, “Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a blast of wind, or call back for me

the day that is past.” I answered and said, “Who of those that have been born can do that, that you should ask me about such things?” And he said to me, “If I had asked you, ‘How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many streams are at the source of the deep, or how many streams are above the firmament, or which are the exits of Hades, or which are the entrances of paradise?’ perhaps you would have said to me, ‘I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into Hades, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.’ But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day—things that you have experienced and from which you cannot be separated, and you have given me no answer about them.” He said to me, “You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up; how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High? And how can one who is already worn out by the corrupt world understand incorruption?” When I heard this, I fell on my face and said to him, “It would have been better for us not to be here than to come here and live in ungodliness, and to suffer and not understand why.”

The New Age Will Make All Things Clear

2 Esdras 4:22-25 Then I answered and said, “I implore you, my lord, why have I been endowed with the power of understanding? For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things that we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles in disgrace; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the law of our ancestors has been brought to destruction and the written covenants no longer exist. We pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist, and we are not worthy to obtain mercy. But what will he do for his name that is invoked over us? It is about these things that I have asked.”

2 Esdras 4:26-32 He answered me and said, “If you are alive, you will see, and if you live long, you will often marvel, because the age is hurrying swiftly to its end. It will not be able to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed times, because this age is full of sadness and infirmities. For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the harvest of it has not yet come. If therefore that which has been sown is not reaped, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come. For a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam’s heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now—and will produce until the time of threshing comes! Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced. When heads of grain

without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill!”

When Will the New Age Come?

2 Esdras 4:33-35 Then I answered and said, “How long? When will these things be? Why are our years few and evil?” He answered me and said, “Do not be in a greater hurry than the Most High. You, indeed, are in a hurry for yourself, but the Highest is in a hurry on behalf of many. Did not the souls of the righteous in their chambers ask about these matters, saying, ‘How long are we to remain here? And when will the harvest of our reward come?’

The Archangel Jeremiel

2 Esdras 4:36-37 And the archangel Jeremiel answered and said, ‘When the number of those like yourselves is completed; for he has weighed the age in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled.’”

Jeremiel's name means 'Mercy of God'. According to tradition in addition to being an archangel of prophetic visions, Jeremiel helps newly-crossed over souls to review their lives, and assists the living with making positive adjustments.

The only reference we have to the archangel Jeremiel is Esdras 4:36. The context of the verse above is very comparable though to Revelation 6:11.

(Rev 6:10-11 NIV) They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Ezra Replies

2 Esdras 4:38-42 Then I answered and said, “But, O sovereign Lord, all of us also are full of ungodliness. It is perhaps on account of us that the time of threshing is delayed for the righteous—on account of the sins of those who inhabit the earth.” He answered me and said, “Go and ask a pregnant woman whether, when her nine months have been completed, her womb can keep the fetus within her any longer.” And I said, “No, lord, it cannot.”

He said to me, “In Hades the chambers of the souls are like the womb. For just as a woman who is in labor makes haste to escape the pangs of birth, so also do these places hasten to give back those things that were committed to them from the beginning.

How Much Time Remains?

2 Esdras 4:44-46 I answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, and if it is possible, and if I am worthy, show me this also: whether more time is to come than has passed, or whether for us the greater part has gone by. For I know what has gone by, but I do not know what is to come.”

2 Esdras 4:47-50 And he said to me, “Stand at my right side, and I will show you the interpretation of a parable.” So I stood and looked, and lo, a flaming furnace passed by before me, and when the flame had gone by I looked, and lo, the smoke remained. And after this a cloud full of water passed before me and poured down a heavy and violent rain, and when the violent rainstorm had passed, drops still remained in the cloud. He said to me, “Consider it for yourself; for just as the rain is more than the drops, and the fire is greater than the smoke, so the quantity that passed was far greater; but drops and smoke remained.”

2 Esdras 4:51-52 Then I prayed and said, “Do you think that I shall live until those days? Or who will be alive in those days?” He answered me and said, “Concerning the signs about which you ask me, I can tell you in part; but I was not sent to tell you concerning your life, for I do not know.

Ezra’s Second Prayer of Complaint

2 Esdras 5:20-30 So I fasted seven days, mourning and weeping, as the angel Uriel had commanded me. After seven days the thoughts of my heart were very grievous to me again. Then my soul recovered the spirit of understanding, and I began once more to speak words in the presence of the Most High. I said, “O sovereign Lord, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees you have chosen one vine, and from all the lands of the world you have chosen for yourself one region, and from all the flowers of the world you have chosen for yourself one lily, and from all the depths of the sea you have filled for yourself one river, and from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself, and from all the birds that have been created you have named for yourself one dove, and from all the flocks that have been made you have provided for yourself one sheep, and from all the multitude of peoples you have gotten for yourself

one people; and to this people, whom you have loved, you have given the law that is approved by all. And now, O Lord, why have you handed the one over to the many, and dishonored the one root beyond the others, and scattered your only one among the many? And those who opposed your promises have trampled on those who believed your covenants. If you really hate your people, they should be punished at your own hands.”

Response to Ezra’s Complaints

2 Esdras 5:31-40 When I had spoken these words, the angel who had come to me on a previous night was sent to me. He said to me, “Listen to me, and I will instruct you; pay attention to me, and I will tell you more.” Then I said, “Speak, my lord.” And he said to me, “Are you greatly disturbed in mind over Israel? Or do you love him more than his Maker does?” I said, “No, my lord, but because of my grief I have spoken; for every hour I suffer agonies of heart, while I strive to understand the way of the Most High and to search out some part of his judgment.” He said to me, “You cannot.” And I said, “Why not, my lord? Why then was I born? Or why did not my mother’s womb become my grave, so that I would not see the travail of Jacob and the exhaustion of the people of Israel?” He said to me, “Count up for me those who have not yet come, and gather for me the scattered raindrops, and make the withered flowers bloom again for me; open for me the closed chambers, and bring out for me the winds shut up in them, or show me the picture of a voice; and then I will explain to you the travail that you ask to understand.” I said, “O sovereign Lord, who is able to know these things except him whose dwelling is not with mortals? As for me, I am without wisdom, and how can I speak concerning the things that you have asked me?” He said to me, “Just as you cannot do one of the things that were mentioned, so you cannot discover my judgment, or the goal of the love that I have promised to my people.”

Why Successive Generations Have Been Created

2 Esdras 5:41-44 I said, “Yet, O Lord, you have charge of those who are alive at the end, but what will those do who lived before me, or we, ourselves, or those who come after us?” He said to me, “I shall liken my judgment to a circle; just as for those who are last there is no slowness, so for those who are first there is no haste.” Then I answered and said, “Could you not have created at one time those who have been and those who are and those who will be, so that you might show your judgment the sooner?” He replied to me and said, “The creation cannot move faster than the Creator, nor can the world hold at one time those who have been created in

it.”

2 Esdras 5:45-49 I said, “How have you said to your servant that you will certainly give life at one time to your creation? If therefore all creatures will live at one time and the creation will sustain them, it might even now be able to support all of them present at one time.” He said to me, “Ask a woman’s womb, and say to it, ‘If you bear ten children, why one after another?’ Request it therefore to produce ten at one time.” I said, “Of course it cannot, but only each in its own time.” He said to me, “Even so I have given the womb of the earth to those who from time to time are sown in it. For as an infant does not bring forth, and a woman who has become old does not bring forth any longer, so I have made the same rule for the world that I created.”

God Created An Innumerable Host Of Angels

2 Esdras 6:1-6 He said to me, “At the beginning of the circle of the earth, before the portals of the world were in place, and before the assembled winds blew, and before the rumblings of thunder sounded, and before the flashes of lightning shone, and before the foundations of paradise were laid, and before the beautiful flowers were seen, and before the powers of movements were established, and before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together, and before the heights of the air were lifted up, and before the measures of the firmaments were named, and before the footstool of Zion was established, and before the present years were reckoned and before the imaginations of those who now sin were estranged, and before those who stored up treasures of faith were sealed—then I planned these things, and they were made through me alone and not through another; just as the end shall come through me alone and not through another.”

(Heb 12:22 KJV) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Why Do God’s People Suffer?

2 Esdras 6:55-59 “All this I have spoken before you, O Lord, because you have said that it was for us that you created this world. As for the other nations that have descended from Adam, you have said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and you have compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket. And now, O Lord, these nations, which

are reputed to be as nothing, domineer over us and devour us. But we your people, whom you have called your firstborn, only begotten, zealous for you, and most dear, have been given into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so?"

Response to Ezra's Questions

2 Esdras 7:1-16 When I had finished speaking these words, the angel who had been sent to me on the former nights was sent to me again. He said to me, "Rise, Ezra, and listen to the words that I have come to speak to you." I said, "Speak, my lord." And he said to me, "There is a sea set in a wide expanse so that it is deep and vast, but it has an entrance set in a narrow place, so that it is like a river. If there are those who wish to reach the sea, to look at it or to navigate it, how can they come to the broad part unless they pass through the narrow part? Another example: There is a city built and set on a plain, and it is full of all good things; but the entrance to it is narrow and set in a precipitous place, so that there is fire on the right hand and deep water on the left. There is only one path lying between them, that is, between the fire and the water, so that only one person can walk on the path. If now the city is given to someone as an inheritance, how will the heir receive the inheritance unless by passing through the appointed danger?" I said, "That is right, lord." He said to me, "So also is Israel's portion. For I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. And so the entrances of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil, full of dangers and involved in great hardships. But the entrances of the greater world are broad and safe, and yield the fruit of immortality. Therefore unless the living pass through the difficult and futile experiences, they can never receive those things that have been reserved for them. Now therefore why are you disturbed, seeing that you are to perish? Why are you moved, seeing that you are mortal? Why have you not considered in your mind what is to come, rather than what is now present?"

The Fate of the Ungodly

2 Esdras 7:17-25 Then I answered and said, "O sovereign Lord, you have ordained in your law that the righteous shall inherit these things, but that the ungodly shall perish. The righteous, therefore, can endure difficult circumstances while hoping for easier ones; but those who have done wickedly have suffered the difficult circumstances and will never see the easier ones." He said to me, "You are not a better judge than the Lord, or

wiser than the Most High! Let many perish who are now living, rather than that the law of God that is set before them be disregarded! For the Lord strictly commanded those who came into the world, when they came, what they should do to live, and what they should observe to avoid punishment. Nevertheless they were not obedient, and spoke against him; they devised for themselves vain thoughts, and proposed to themselves wicked frauds; they even declared that the Most High does not exist, and they ignored his ways. They scorned his law, and denied his covenants; they have been unfaithful to his statutes, and have not performed his works. That is the reason, Ezra, that empty things are for the empty, and full things are for the full.

Only a Few Will Be Saved

2 Esdras 7:45-48 I answered and said, “O sovereign Lord, I said then and I say now: Blessed are those who are alive and keep your commandments! But what of those for whom I prayed? For who among the living is there that has not sinned, or who is there among mortals that has not transgressed your covenant? And now I see that the world to come will bring delight to few, but torments to many. For an evil heart has grown up in us, which has alienated us from God, and has brought us into corruption and the ways of death, and has shown us the paths of perdition and removed us far from life—and that not merely for a few but for almost all who have been created.”

2 Esdras 7:49-61 He answered me and said, “Listen to me, Ezra, and I will instruct you, and will admonish you once more. For this reason the Most High has made not one world but two. Inasmuch as you have said that the righteous are not many but few, while the ungodly abound, hear the explanation for this. “If you have just a few precious stones, will you add to them lead and clay?” I said, “Lord, how could that be?” And he said to me, “Not only that, but ask the earth and she will tell you; defer to her, and she will declare it to you. Say to her, ‘You produce gold and silver and bronze, and also iron and lead and clay; but silver is more abundant than gold, and bronze than silver, and iron than bronze, and lead than iron, and clay than lead.’ Judge therefore which things are precious and desirable, those that are abundant or those that are rare?” I said, “O sovereign Lord, what is plentiful is of less worth, for what is more rare is more precious.” He answered me and said, “Consider within yourself what you have thought, for the person who has what is hard to get rejoices more than the person who has what is plentiful. So also will be the judgment that I have promised; for I will rejoice over the few who shall be saved, because it is

they who have made my glory to prevail now, and through them my name has now been honored. I will not grieve over the great number of those who perish; for it is they who are now like a mist, and are similar to a flame and smoke—they are set on fire and burn hotly, and are extinguished.”

Lamentation of Ezra, with Response

2 Esdras 7:62-74 I replied and said, “O earth, what have you brought forth, if the mind is made out of the dust like the other created things? For it would have been better if the dust itself had not been born, so that the mind might not have been made from it. But now the mind grows with us, and therefore we are tormented, because we perish and we know it. Let the human race lament, but let the wild animals of the field be glad; let all who have been born lament, but let the cattle and the flocks rejoice. It is much better with them than with us; for they do not look for a judgment, and they do not know of any torment or salvation promised to them after death. What does it profit us that we shall be preserved alive but cruelly tormented? For all who have been born are entangled in iniquities, and are full of sins and burdened with transgressions. And if after death we were not to come into judgment, perhaps it would have been better for us.” He answered me and said, “When the Most High made the world and Adam and all who have come from him, he first prepared the judgment and the things that pertain to the judgment. But now, understand from your own words—for you have said that the mind grows with us. For this reason, therefore, those who live on earth shall be tormented, because though they had understanding, they committed iniquity; and though they received the commandments, they did not keep them; and though they obtained the law, they dealt unfaithfully with what they received. What, then, will they have to say in the judgment, or how will they answer in the last times? How long the Most High has been patient with those who inhabit the world!—and not for their sake, but because of the times that he has foreordained.”

State of the Dead before Judgment

2 Esdras 7:75-87 I answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, show this also to your servant: whether after death, as soon as everyone of us yields up the soul, we shall be kept in rest until those times come when you will renew the creation, or whether we shall be tormented at once?” He answered me and said, “I will show you that also, but do not include yourself with those who have shown scorn, or number yourself among those who are tormented. For you have a treasure of works stored up with the Most High, but it will not be shown to you until the last times.

Now concerning death, the teaching is: When the decisive decree has gone out from the Most High that a person shall die, as the spirit leaves the body to return again to him who gave it, first of all it adores the glory of the Most High. If it is one of those who have shown scorn and have not kept the way of the Most High, who have despised his law and hated those who fear God—such spirits shall not enter into habitations, but shall immediately wander about in torments, always grieving and sad, in seven ways. The first way, because they have scorned the law of the Most High. The second way, because they cannot now make a good repentance so that they may live. The third way, they shall see the reward laid up for those who have trusted the covenants of the Most High. The fourth way, they shall consider the torment laid up for themselves in the last days. The fifth way, they shall see how the habitations of the others are guarded by angels in profound quiet. The sixth way, they shall see how some of them will cross over into torments. The seventh way, which is worse than all the ways that have been mentioned, because they shall utterly waste away in confusion and be consumed with shame, and shall wither with fear at seeing the glory of the Most High in whose presence they sinned while they were alive, and in whose presence they are to be judged in the last times.

2 Esdras 7:88-101 “Now this is the order of those who have kept the ways of the Most High, when they shall be separated from their mortal body. During the time that they lived in it, they laboriously served the Most High, and withstood danger every hour so that they might keep the law of the Lawgiver perfectly. Therefore this is the teaching concerning them: First of all, they shall see with great joy the glory of him who receives them, for they shall have rest in seven orders. The first order, because they have striven with great effort to overcome the evil thought that was formed with them, so that it might not lead them astray from life into death. The second order, because they see the perplexity in which the souls of the ungodly wander and the punishment that awaits them. The third order, they see the witness that he who formed them bears concerning them, that throughout their life they kept the law with which they were entrusted. The fourth order, they understand the rest that they now enjoy, being gathered into their chambers and guarded by angels in profound quiet, and the glory waiting for them in the last days. The fifth order, they rejoice that they have now escaped what is corruptible and shall inherit what is to come; and besides they see the straits and toil from which they have been delivered, and the spacious liberty that they are to receive and enjoy in immortality. The sixth order, when it is shown them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on. The seventh order, which is greater than all that have been

mentioned, because they shall rejoice with boldness, and shall be confident without confusion, and shall be glad without fear, for they press forward to see the face of him whom they served in life and from whom they are to receive their reward when glorified. This is the order of the souls of the righteous, as henceforth is announced; and the previously mentioned are the ways of torment that those who would not give heed shall suffer hereafter.” Then I answered and said, “Will time therefore be given to the souls, after they have been separated from the bodies, to see what you have described to me?” He said to me, “They shall have freedom for seven days, so that during these seven days they may see the things of which you have been told, and afterwards they shall be gathered in their habitations.”

No Intercession for the Ungodly

2 Esdras 7:102-111 I answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, show further to me, your servant, whether on the day of judgment the righteous will be able to intercede for the ungodly or to entreat the Most High for them—fathers for sons or sons for parents, brothers for brothers, relatives for their kindred, or friends for those who are most dear.” He answered me and said, “Since you have found favor in my sight, I will show you this also. The day of judgment is decisive and displays to all the seal of truth. Just as now a father does not send his son, or a son his father, or a master his servant, or a friend his dearest friend, to be ill or sleep or eat or be healed in his place, so no one shall ever pray for another on that day, neither shall anyone lay a burden on another; for then all shall bear their own righteousness and unrighteousness.” I answered and said, “How then do we find that first Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom, and Moses for our ancestors who sinned in the desert, and Joshua after him for Israel in the days of Achan, and Samuel in the days of Saul, and David for the plague, and Solomon for those at the dedication, and Elijah for those who received the rain, and for the one who was dead, that he might live, and Hezekiah for the people in the days of Sennacherib, and many others prayed for many? So if now, when corruption has increased and unrighteousness has multiplied, the righteous have prayed for the ungodly, why will it not be so then as well?”

2 Esdras 7:112-115 He answered me and said, “This present world is not the end; the full glory does not remain in it; therefore those who were strong prayed for the weak. But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut

off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. Therefore no one will then be able to have mercy on someone who has been condemned in the judgment, or to harm someone who is victorious.”

Lamentation over the Fate of Most People

2 Esdras 7:116-131 I answered and said, “This is my first and last comment: it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an immortal time has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised to us, but we have miserably failed? Or that safe and healthful habitations have been reserved for us, but we have lived wickedly? Or that the glory of the Most High will defend those who have led a pure life, but we have walked in the most wicked ways? Or that a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it because we have lived in perverse ways? Or that the faces of those who practiced self-control shall shine more than the stars, but our faces shall be blacker than darkness? For while we lived and committed iniquity we did not consider what we should suffer after death.” He answered and said, “This is the significance of the contest that all who are born on earth shall wage: if they are defeated they shall suffer what you have said, but if they are victorious they shall receive what I have said. For this is the way of which Moses, while he was alive, spoke to the people, saying, ‘Choose life for yourself, so that you may live!’ But they did not believe him or the prophets after him, or even myself who have spoken to them. Therefore there shall not be grief at their destruction, so much as joy over those to whom salvation is assured.”

Ezra Appeals to God’s Mercy

2 Esdras 7:132-140 I answered and said, “I know, O Lord, that the Most High is now called merciful, because he has mercy on those who have not yet come into the world; and gracious, because he is gracious to those who turn in repentance to his law; and patient, because he shows patience toward those who have sinned, since they are his own creatures; and bountiful, because he would rather give than take away; and abundant in compassion, because he makes his compassions abound more and more to those now living and to those who are gone and to those yet to come—

for if he did not make them abound, the world with those who inhabit it would not have life—and he is called the giver, because if he did not give out of his goodness so that those who have committed iniquities might be relieved of them, not one ten-thousandth of humankind could have life; and the judge, because if he did not pardon those who were created by his word and blot out the multitude of their sins, there would probably be left only very few of the innumerable multitude.”

2 Esdras 8:1-3 He answered me and said, “The Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of only a few. But I tell you a parable, Ezra. Just as, when you ask the earth, it will tell you that it provides a large amount of clay from which earthenware is made, but only a little dust from which gold comes, so is the course of the present world. Many have been created, but only a few shall be saved.”

Ezra Again Appeals to God’s Mercy

2 Esdras 8:4-19 I answered and said, “Then drink your fill of understanding, O my soul, and drink wisdom, O my heart. For not of your own will did you come into the world, and against your will you depart, for you have been given only a short time to live. O Lord above us, grant to your servant that we may pray before you, and give us a seed for our heart and cultivation of our understanding so that fruit may be produced, by which every mortal who bears the likeness of a human being may be able to live. For you alone exist, and we are a work of your hands, as you have declared. And because you give life to the body that is now fashioned in the womb, and furnish it with members, what you have created is preserved amid fire and water, and for nine months the womb endures your creature that has been created in it. But that which keeps and that which is kept shall both be kept by your keeping. And when the womb gives up again what has been created in it, you have commanded that from the members themselves (that is, from the breasts) milk, the fruit of the breasts, should be supplied, so that what has been fashioned may be nourished for a time; and afterwards you will still guide it in your mercy. You have nurtured it in your righteousness, and instructed it in your law, and reprovéd it in your wisdom. You put it to death as your creation, and make it live as your work. If then you will suddenly and quickly destroy what with so great labor was fashioned by your command, to what purpose was it made? And now I will speak out: About all humankind you know best; but I will speak about your people, for whom I am grieved, and about your inheritance, for whom I lament, and about Israel, for whom I am sad, and about the seed of Jacob, for whom I am troubled. Therefore I will pray before you for myself and for

them, for I see the failings of us who inhabit the earth; and now also I have heard of the swiftness of the judgment that is to come. Therefore hear my voice and understand my words, and I will speak before you.”

Ezra's Prayer

2 Esdras 8:20-36 The beginning of the words of Ezra's prayer, before he was taken up. He said: “O Lord, you who inhabit eternity, whose eyes are exalted and whose upper chambers are in the air, whose throne is beyond measure and whose glory is beyond comprehension, before whom the hosts of angels stand trembling and at whose command they are changed to wind and fire, whose word is sure and whose utterances are certain, whose command is strong and whose ordinance is terrible, whose look dries up the depths and whose indignation makes the mountains melt away, and whose truth is established forever—hear, O Lord, the prayer of your servant, and give ear to the petition of your creature; attend to my words. For as long as I live I will speak, and as long as I have understanding I will answer. O do not look on the sins of your people, but on those who serve you in truth. Do not take note of the endeavors of those who act wickedly, but of the endeavors of those who have kept your covenants amid afflictions. Do not think of those who have lived wickedly in your sight, but remember those who have willingly acknowledged that you are to be feared. Do not will the destruction of those who have the ways of cattle, but regard those who have gloriously taught your law. Do not be angry with those who are deemed worse than wild animals, but love those who have always put their trust in your glory. For we and our ancestors have passed our lives in ways that bring death; but it is because of us sinners that you are called merciful. For if you have desired to have pity on us, who have no works of righteousness, then you will be called merciful. For the righteous, who have many works laid up with you, shall receive their reward in consequence of their own deeds. But what are mortals, that you are angry with them; or what is a corruptible race, that you are so bitter against it? For in truth there is no one among those who have been born who has not acted wickedly; among those who have existed there is no one who has not done wrong. For in this, O Lord, your righteousness and goodness will be declared, when you are merciful to those who have no store of good works.”

Response to Ezra's Prayer

2 Esdras 8:37-45 He answered me and said, “Some things you have spoken rightly, and it will turn out according to your words. For indeed I will

not concern myself about the fashioning of those who have sinned, or about their death, their judgment, or their destruction; but I will rejoice over the creation of the righteous, over their pilgrimage also, and their salvation, and their receiving their reward. As I have spoken, therefore, so it shall be. “For just as the farmer sows many seeds in the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will come up in due season, and not all that were planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved.” I answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, let me speak. If the farmer’s seed does not come up, because it has not received your rain in due season, or if it has been ruined by too much rain, it perishes. But people, who have been formed by your hands and are called your own image because they are made like you, and for whose sake you have formed all things—have you also made them like the farmer’s seed? Surely not, O Lord above! But spare your people and have mercy on your inheritance, for you have mercy on your own creation.”

Ezra’s Final Appeal for Mercy

2 Esdras 8:46-61 He answered me and said, “Things that are present are for those who live now, and things that are future are for those who will live hereafter. For you come far short of being able to love my creation more than I love it. But you have often compared yourself to the unrighteous. Never do so! But even in this respect you will be praiseworthy before the Most High, because you have humbled yourself, as is becoming for you, and have not considered yourself to be among the righteous. You will receive the greatest glory, for many miseries will affect those who inhabit the world in the last times, because they have walked in great pride. But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, because it is for you that paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. The root of evil is sealed up from you, illness is banished from you, and death is hidden; Hades has fled and corruption has been forgotten; sorrows have passed away, and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest. Therefore do not ask any more questions about the great number of those who perish. For when they had opportunity to choose, they despised the Most High, and were contemptuous of his law, and abandoned his ways. Moreover, they have even trampled on his righteous ones, and said in their hearts that there is no God—though they knew well that they must die. For just as the things that I have predicted await you, so the thirst and torment that are prepared await them. For the Most High did

not intend that anyone should be destroyed; but those who were created have themselves defiled the name of him who made them, and have been ungrateful to him who prepared life for them now. Therefore my judgment is now drawing near; I have not shown this to all people, but only to you and a few like you.”

The Abiding Glory of the Mosaic Law

2 Esdras 9:26-37 So I went, as he directed me, into the field that is called Ardat; there I sat among the flowers and ate of the plants of the field, and the nourishment they afforded satisfied me. After seven days, while I lay on the grass, my heart was troubled again as it was before. Then my mouth was opened, and I began to speak before the Most High, and said, “O Lord, you showed yourself among us, to our ancestors in the wilderness when they came out from Egypt and when they came into the untrodden and unfruitful wilderness; and you said, ‘Hear me, O Israel, and give heed to my words, O descendants of Jacob. For I sow my law in you, and it shall bring forth fruit in you, and you shall be glorified through it forever.’ But though our ancestors received the law, they did not keep it and did not observe the statutes; yet the fruit of the law did not perish—for it could not, because it was yours. Yet those who received it perished, because they did not keep what had been sown in them. Now this is the general rule that, when the ground has received seed, or the sea a ship, or any dish food or drink, and when it comes about that what was sown or what was launched or what was put in is destroyed, they are destroyed, but the things that held them remain; yet with us it has not been so. For we who have received the law and sinned will perish, as well as our hearts that received it; the law, however, does not perish but survives in its glory.”

The Vision of a Weeping Woman

2 Esdras 9:38-41 When I said these things in my heart, I looked around, and on my right I saw a woman; she was mourning and weeping with a loud voice, and was deeply grieved at heart; her clothes were torn, and there were ashes on her head. Then I dismissed the thoughts with which I had been engaged, and turned to her and said to her, “Why are you weeping, and why are you grieved at heart?” She said to me, “Let me alone, my lord, so that I may weep for myself and continue to mourn, for I am greatly embittered in spirit and deeply distressed.”

2 Esdras 9:42-47 I said to her, “What has happened to you? Tell me.” And she said to me, “Your servant was barren and had no child, though I lived

with my husband for thirty years. Every hour and every day during those thirty years I prayed to the Most High, night and day. And after thirty years God heard your servant, and looked upon my low estate, and considered my distress, and gave me a son. I rejoiced greatly over him, I and my husband and all my neighbors; and we gave great glory to the Mighty One. And I brought him up with much care. So when he grew up and I came to take a wife for him, I set a day for the marriage feast.

2 Esdras 10:1-4 “But it happened that when my son entered his wedding chamber, he fell down and died. So all of us put out our lamps, and all my neighbors attempted to console me; I remained quiet until the evening of the second day. But when all of them had stopped consoling me, encouraging me to be quiet, I got up in the night and fled, and I came to this field, as you see. And now I intend not to return to the town, but to stay here; I will neither eat nor drink, but will mourn and fast continually until I die.”

2 Esdras 10:5-17 Then I broke off the reflections with which I was still engaged, and answered her in anger and said, “You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning, and what has happened to us? For Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great distress. It is most appropriate to mourn now, because we are all mourning, and to be sorrowful, because we are all sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, for our mother. Now ask the earth, and she will tell you that it is she who ought to mourn over so many who have come into being upon her. From the beginning all have been born of her, and others will come; and, lo, almost all go to perdition, and a multitude of them will come to doom. Who then ought to mourn the more, she who lost so great a multitude, or you who are grieving for one alone? But if you say to me, ‘My lamentation is not like the earth’s, for I have lost the fruit of my womb, which I brought forth in pain and bore in sorrow; but it is with the earth according to the way of the earth—the multitude that is now in it goes as it came’; then I say to you, ‘Just as you brought forth in sorrow, so the earth also has from the beginning given her fruit, that is, humankind, to him who made her.’ Now, therefore, keep your sorrow to yourself, and bear bravely the troubles that have come upon you. For if you acknowledge the decree of God to be just, you will receive your son back in due time, and will be praised among women. Therefore go into the town to your husband.” She said to me, “I will not do so; I will not go into the city, but I will die here.”

2 Esdras 10:19-24 So I spoke again to her, and said, “Do not do that, but let yourself be persuaded—for how many are the adversities of Zion?—and

be consoled because of the sorrow of Jerusalem. For you see how our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down, our temple destroyed; our harp has been laid low, our song has been silenced, and our rejoicing has been ended; the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been almost profaned; our children have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into exile, our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished; our righteous men have been carried off, our little ones have been cast out, our young men have been enslaved and our strong men made powerless. And, worst of all, the seal of Zion has been deprived of its glory, and given over into the hands of those that hate us. Therefore shake off your great sadness and lay aside your many sorrows, so that the Mighty One may be merciful to you again, and the Most High may give you rest, a respite from your troubles.”

2 Esdras 10:25-28 While I was talking to her, her face suddenly began to shine exceedingly; her countenance flashed like lightning, so that I was too frightened to approach her, and my heart was terrified. While I was wondering what this meant, she suddenly uttered a loud and fearful cry, so that the earth shook at the sound. When I looked up, the woman was no longer visible to me, but a city was being built, and a place of huge foundations showed itself. I was afraid, and cried with a loud voice and said, “Where is the angel Uriel, who came to me at first? For it was he who brought me into this overpowering bewilderment; my end has become corruption, and my prayer a reproach.”

Uriel’s Interpretation of the Vision

2 Esdras 10:29-36 While I was speaking these words, the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and when he saw me lying there like a corpse, deprived of my understanding, he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me, “What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled?” I said, “It was because you abandoned me. I did as you directed, and went out into the field, and lo, what I have seen and can still see, I am unable to explain.” He said to me, “Stand up like a man, and I will instruct you.” I said, “Speak, my lord; only do not forsake me, so that I may not die before my time. For I have seen what I did not know, and I hear what I do not understand—or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming? Now therefore I beg you to give your servant an explanation of this bewildering vision.”

2 Esdras 10:38-54 He answered me and said, “Listen to me, and I will teach you, and tell you about the things that you fear; for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you. He has seen your righteous conduct, and that you have sorrowed continually for your people and mourned greatly over Zion. This therefore is the meaning of the vision. The woman who appeared to you a little while ago, whom you saw mourning and whom you began to console (you do not now see the form of a woman, but there appeared to you a city being built) and who told you about the misfortune of her son—this is the interpretation: The woman whom you saw is Zion, which you now behold as a city being built. And as for her telling you that she was barren for thirty years, the reason is that there were three thousand years in the world before any offering was offered in it. And after three thousand years Solomon built the city, and offered offerings; then it was that the barren woman bore a son. And as for her telling you that she brought him up with much care, that was the period of residence in Jerusalem. And as for her saying to you, ‘My son died as he entered his wedding chamber,’ and that misfortune had overtaken her, this was the destruction that befell Jerusalem. So you saw her likeness, how she mourned for her son, and you began to console her for what had happened. For now the Most High, seeing that you are sincerely grieved and profoundly distressed for her, has shown you the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty. Therefore I told you to remain in the field where no house had been built, for I knew that the Most High would reveal these things to you. Therefore I told you to go into the field where there was no foundation of any building, because no work of human construction could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed.

2 Esdras 10:55-59 “Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor or the vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it, and afterward you will hear as much as your ears can hear. For you are more blessed than many, and you have been called to be with the Most High as few have been. But tomorrow night you shall remain here, and the Most High will show you in those dream visions what the Most High will do to those who inhabit the earth in the last days.” So I slept that night and the following one, as he had told me.

The People Come to Ezra

2 Esdras 12:40-45 When all the people heard that the seven days were past and I had not returned to the city, they all gathered together, from the

least to the greatest, and came to me and spoke to me, saying, "How have we offended you, and what harm have we done you, that you have forsaken us and sit in this place? For of all the prophets you alone are left to us, like a cluster of grapes from the vintage, and like a lamp in a dark place, and like a haven for a ship saved from a storm. Are not the disasters that have befallen us enough? Therefore if you forsake us, how much better it would have been for us if we also had been consumed in the burning of Zion. For we are no better than those who died there." And they wept with a loud voice.

2 Esdras 12:46-51 Then I answered them and said, "Take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob; for the Most High has you in remembrance, and the Mighty One has not forgotten you in your struggle. As for me, I have neither forsaken you nor withdrawn from you; but I have come to this place to pray on account of the desolation of Zion, and to seek mercy on account of the humiliation of our sanctuary. Now go to your homes, every one of you, and after these days I will come to you." So the people went into the city, as I told them to do. But I sat in the field seven days, as the angel had commanded me; and I ate only of the flowers of the field, and my food was of plants during those days.

The Lord Commissions Ezra

2 Esdras 14:1-18 On the third day, while I was sitting under an oak, suddenly a voice came out of a bush opposite me and said, "Ezra, Ezra!" And I answered, "Here I am, Lord," and I rose to my feet. Then he said to me, "I revealed myself in a bush and spoke to Moses when my people were in bondage in Egypt; and I sent him and led my people out of Egypt; and I led him up on Mount Sinai, where I kept him with me many days. I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of the times. Then I commanded him, saying, 'These words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret.' And now I say to you: Lay up in your heart the signs that I have shown you, the dreams that you have seen, and the interpretations that you have heard; for you shall be taken up from among humankind, and henceforth you shall live with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended. The age has lost its youth, and the times begin to grow old. For the age is divided into twelve parts, and nine of its parts have already passed, as well as half of the tenth part; so two of its parts remain, besides half of the tenth part. Now therefore, set your house in order, and reprove your people; comfort the lowly among them, and instruct those that are wise. And now renounce the life that is corruptible, and put away from you

mortal thoughts; cast away from you the burdens of humankind, and divest yourself now of your weak nature; lay to one side the thoughts that are most grievous to you, and hurry to escape from these times. For evils worse than those that you have now seen happen shall take place hereafter. For the weaker the world becomes through old age, the more shall evils be increased upon its inhabitants. Truth shall go farther away, and falsehood shall come near. For the eagle that you saw in the vision is already hurrying to come.”

Ezra’s Concern to Restore the Scriptures

2 Esdras 14:19-22 Then I answered and said, “Let me speak in your presence, Lord. For I will go, as you have commanded me, and I will reprove the people who are now living; but who will warn those who will be born hereafter? For the world lies in darkness, and its inhabitants are without light. For your law has been burned, and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by you. If then I have found favor with you, send the holy spirit into me, and I will write everything that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things that were written in your law, so that people may be able to find the path, and that those who want to live in the last days may do so.”

2 Esdras 14:23-26 He answered me and said, “Go and gather the people, and tell them not to seek you for forty days. But prepare for yourself many writing tablets, and take with you Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ethanus, and Asiel—these five, who are trained to write rapidly; and you shall come here, and I will light in your heart the lamp of understanding, which shall not be put out until what you are about to write is finished. And when you have finished, some things you shall make public, and some you shall deliver in secret to the wise; tomorrow at this hour you shall begin to write.”

Ezra’s Last Words to the People

2 Esdras 14:27-36 Then I went as he commanded me, and I gathered all the people together, and said, “Hear these words, O Israel. At first our ancestors lived as aliens in Egypt, and they were liberated from there and received the law of life, which they did not keep, which you also have transgressed after them. Then land was given to you for a possession in the land of Zion; but you and your ancestors committed iniquity and did not keep the ways that the Most High commanded you. And since he is a righteous judge, in due time he took from you what he had given. And now you are here, and your people are farther in the interior. If you, then, will

rule over your minds and discipline your hearts, you shall be kept alive, and after death you shall obtain mercy. For after death the judgment will come, when we shall live again; and then the names of the righteous shall become manifest, and the deeds of the ungodly shall be disclosed. But let no one come to me now, and let no one seek me for forty days.”

The Restoration of the Scriptures

2 Esdras 14:37-48 So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we proceeded to the field, and remained there. And on the next day a voice called me, saying, “Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink.” So I opened my mouth, and a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory, and my mouth was opened and was no longer closed. Moreover, the Most High gave understanding to the five men, and by turns they wrote what was dictated, using characters that they did not know. They sat forty days; they wrote during the daytime, and ate their bread at night. But as for me, I spoke in the daytime and was not silent at night. So during the forty days, ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, “Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first, and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.” And I did so.

Here ends the section of 2 Esdras that concerns those in exile. Ezra received more prophecies concerning the end times and those will be presented in a future chapter.