

Chapter Eleven

Light and Shadow: Second Kings, Second Chronicles 21-36

Second Kings

Since the two books of Kings in our present Bible were originally one book, 2 Kings continues on in the account of the kings of Judah and Israel where I Kings ends.

Second Kings opens with the closing incident of the life of Elijah during the reign of King Ahaziah of Israel, the son of Ahab. Ahaziah reigned for only two years and the last word we read of him in I Kings was that he "provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done." Perhaps for this, he fell through a lattice window and, while lying injured, sent to inquire of the pagan god, Baalzebub, as to whether he would recover. For this he was severely rebuked by Elijah the prophet, who informed him that he would die.

When the king sent a band of 50 soldiers to capture him, Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume them. Another band of 50 men met with a similar fate, and when the third band of 50 came, the captain entreated Elijah to spare him and his men, and the prophet went with him to the king to convey personally his sentence of doom. When the king died his brother Jehoram succeeded him, for Ahaziah had no son.

Here a certain degree of difficulty enters in keeping straight the two lines of kings in Israel and Judah, for when this Jehoram had reigned for seven years in Israel another Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat began his reign in Judah. The problem is further complicated by the fact that a shorter spelling, Joram, was used for both kings at various times. A similar confusion later exists with Kings Ahaziah and Joash.

Elijah's last moments on earth and his triumphant and miraculous translation into heaven without dying is next related in careful detail. When the faithful Elisha refused to leave him until his moment of translation, the mantle of Elijah fell upon him. He had been promised a double portion of the spirit of Elijah and this became evident immediately in the first two incidents of his ministry. There was the punitive character of Elijah in the story of the she-bears who came out of the woods to destroy those youths who jeered at him, in mockery of Elijah's translation (2:24). But there is also clearly evident the spirit of grace and kindness when he made the bitter waters wholesome by throwing a handful of salt into them (2:20,21).

These two men, Elijah and Elisha, both portray the future ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Elijah pictures His attitude toward official Israel, reflected in Christ's two cleansings of the Temple with the whip of cords and with flashing eyes, while Elisha pictures the ministry of Jesus to individuals, filled with compassionate tenderness and helpfulness.

During the reign of Jehoram of Israel, the nation Moab rebelled against Israel's control and Jehoram joined with King Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom to suppress the rebellion. The allied kings found themselves in the desert with no water. They sought the counsel of Elisha who promised that the valley should be filled with water, though no rain would fall, and that their attack upon Moab would be successful. Evidently a flash flood from some considerable distance did indeed fill the valley with water without any rain falling on the spot, and their campaign was successful, as the prophet had predicted.

Chapters 4-8 contain a series of incidents from the life and ministry of Elisha, which are given in a somewhat jumbled chronological order but are presented together in this way to indicate the ministry of mercy extended to individuals while the judgments of God ground out the ultimate overthrow and exile of the nation. In these

miracles Elisha provided a continuous flow of oil to a poor widow until she had enough to pay her debts; he healed the barrenness of a wealthy woman of Shunem who had been kind to him; she later bore a son and he raised this same child from the dead when he succumbed to a sudden fever; he rendered harmless a pot of poisonous vegetables by casting in a handful of meal; he fed several hundred men with only 20 loaves of bread; he healed the Syrian general, Naaman, from leprosy by having him dip seven times in the Jordan River; he caused a lost axehead to float on top of water; he opened his servant's eyes to see the Lord's chariots of fire that were protecting them when the Syrian army was besieging them; he rescued the city of Samaria by making the attacking Syrian army hear sounds of a great army which frightened them away; he predicted to Hazael, the Syrian general, that his master, Ben-hadad, king of Syria, would recover from his sickness but would be murdered by Hazael who would then proceed to bring much distress upon Israel. This insight caused Elisha to weep, much as centuries later Jesus wept over the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

In 2 Kings 8:16 the chronicler returns to the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, giving a brief account of the reign of Joram, the son of Jehoshaphat, who married the daughter of Ahab of Israel and "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done" (v. 18). As a result of his evil the land of Edom revolted from the rule of Judah as did the city of Libnah. Joram was succeeded by his son Ahaziah (v. 24) who joined with King Joram of Israel to war against Hazael, king of Syria.

During the battle Joram of Israel was wounded and returned to Jezreel to recover. While Ahaziah of Judah was visiting him Elisha sent one of the young prophets to anoint Jehu, the general of Israel to be king in Joram's place. Immediately Jehu mounted his chariot and, driving furiously, headed for Jezreel.

Learning that Jehu was on his way, the two kings (Joram and Ahaziah) set out to meet him and came upon him at the vineyard, formerly belonging to Naboth. There the prophecy of Elijah to Ahab was fulfilled when Jehu drew his bow and slew Joram, leaving his body in the vineyard of Naboth. As Ahaziah fled, he was shot by Jehu's men and, wounded, fled to Megiddo, where he died.

Coming back to Jezreel, Jehu saw Jezebel, Ahab's widow, looking at him from her window. Jehu called to her attendants to throw her down from the window. When they did so her body was eaten by dogs, again according to the prophecy of Elijah.

Jehu then became a terrible scourge in the hands of God. But he himself did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam and "was not careful to walk in the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart" (10:31). As a consequence, parts of Israel fell into the hands of Syria and after a reign of 28 years, Jehu died and his son Jehoahaz reigned in his stead.

When the queen mother, Athaliah (daughter of Ahab and Jezebel) learned that her son, Ahaziah, was dead, she seized the throne of Judah for herself, murdering the entire royal family (her own grandsons), except for an infant named Joash, who was hidden by his sister in the Temple. Like her mother, Jezebel, Athaliah was a devotee of Baal worship, and for the six years of her reign she did her best to introduce the worship of this male sex god to Judah, installing a priest named Mattan to officiate at her altars.

During this six year period, the boy king, Joash, was still hidden in the Temple, as evidence of the divine overruling of human events. But in the seventh year, Jehoiada the priest, the husband of the woman who had hidden Joash, organized a plot to put Joash on the throne. With the support of the army and the priesthood, he brought the seven-year-old boy out and publicly anointed him as king. Athaliah was slain and the temple of Baal destroyed (11: 13-18).

Joash (also spelled Jehoash) reigned for 40 years in Judah; and it is recorded he "did right in the sight of the Lord all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him" (12:2). The major event of his reign was the repairing of the Temple, which had been neglected for many years. This was accomplished by special offerings which the king himself oversaw. The close of his reign was shadowed by an invasion from Syria which Joash, in cowardice, averted by surrendering the treasures of the Temple to the king of Syria. Soon after this, a conspiracy was plotted by his servants, and Joash was slain in Jerusalem and his son Amaziah ascended the throne.

Turning again to Israel the Northern Kingdom, we find Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, upon the throne. He continued the evil of the kings before him and in consequence the Syrians, under King Hazael, reconquered great portions of the land, and left Jehoahaz with an army of only 50 horsemen and chariots and 10,000 soldiers. Seeing the low state of Israel, the king turned to the Lord and besought His help. In response, "a savior" was granted to Israel. We are not told who this was, but it is very likely that it refers to an incident with Elisha the prophet, which immediately followed (13:14-19).

After a reign of 17 years Jehoahaz died and his son, Joash (not to be confused with the Joash of Judah) reigned. During his reign Elisha died and was buried, but even after his death miracles followed him. A group of men seeking to dispose of a body were suddenly surprised by a mob of bandits. They threw the body into the tomb of Elisha and when the body touched the bones of Elisha the man sprang back to life. Thus the entire ministry of Elisha seems to typify the ministry of the Spirit of Christ in bringing life out of death.

Turning briefly to Judah we are told that Amaziah, the son of Joash, "did right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father" (14:3). Still the high places were not removed and worship continued there instead of at the Temple in Jerusalem where it belonged. Amaziah won a great victory over Edom and, emboldened by this, he challenged the power of King Joash of Israel. They met in battle and Amaziah was captured and a portion of the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the Temple entered and sacked. Though Amaziah was permitted to reign 15 years after the death of Joash of Israel, eventually a conspiracy was made against him and he was slain in the city of Lachish. His son Azariah, who was only 16 years old, was made king in his place.

In Israel Jeroboam II, who followed his father Joash to the throne, had reigned for 41 years. During this time he reconquered all of Israel's territory from Syria and even brought Damascus and Hamath of Syria under tributary to Israel. The prophet Jonah (famous for his escapade with a fish) ministered in Israel during the days of Jeroboam II, also the prophets Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. Yet despite this gracious touch from the Lord, Jeroboam walked in evil ways and after his long reign, was replaced by his son Zechariah (15:8).

Azariah (15:1) is known as Uzziah in the book of 2 Chronicles (26:1-3) and also in the prophecy of Isaiah (6:1). It was during his long reign of 52 years that Isaiah began his great ministry. Azariah followed in the footsteps of his father, Amaziah, but like him did not remove the high places nor interfere with the worship that went on there. In 2 Chronicles 26:16 we are told that "when he became strong, his heart was...proud" and sought to offer incense himself upon the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem. For this he was smitten with leprosy and remained a leper until his death. His son Jotham shared the regency with him and succeeded to the throne upon Azariah's death.

Meanwhile in Israel, things were rapidly sliding into chaos. Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, only reigned for six months and was slain by Shallum who thus ended the dynasty of Jehu in the fourth generation, as had been predicted. Shallum was only on the throne one month, and was succeeded by Menahem, who slew him and reigned for 10 evil years, characterized by cruelty and extortion. During his days the land was invaded by the new world power of Assyria to the north. Menahem was forced to pay tribute to Pul (otherwise known as Tiglath-pileser).

Menahem was succeeded by his son, Pekahiah, who reigned for two brief, evil years (2 Kings 15:23) and was slain by an army captain named Pekah. During Pekah's reign of 20 years, Tiglath-pileser of Syria invaded the northern portion of Israel and carried off captives from Galilee. Pekah later was slain by Hoshea, who had the support of Assyria. This murderous state of affairs in Israel was testimony to the persistent evil of king and people, in turning from the living God.

Things were not much better in Judah, for though Jotham, the son of Amaziah, walked before the Lord in some degree of righteousness, nevertheless, during his 16-year reign, the kings of Syria and Israel threatened the land of Judah, sent, as we are told, by the hand of the Lord as a judgment against Judah.

Jotham was followed by his son Ahaz, who likewise reigned for 16 years in Jerusalem. During the reign the nation sank to a new low, for the king himself practiced the abominations of the Canaanites, even offering his son as a burnt offering to the god Moloch. When the combined armies of Syria and Israel came against him he sought help from the king of Assyria, offering to be his vassal. He followed this idiocy by constructing a

heathen altar in the actual courts of the Temple, commanding the priests to offer sacrifice on it (16: 1~16). Further, he desecrated some of the holy furnishings in the outer court of the Temple. Yet during his reign, Isaiah and Micah, the prophets, carried on a faithful ministry of testimony to the truth.

In chapter 17 we have the record of how God's long patience with Israel was at last exhausted, and the divine stroke of judgment falls. During the nine-year reign of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, Shalmaneser V of Assyria, invaded Israel and besieged Samaria. After three years the city fell and the Assyrian king systematically deported the Israelites into various cities of Assyria and Media.

Careful assessment is made of the reasons for this overthrow of the people of God. Their persistent sins of pride, evil practices, and public idolatry are detailed, and especially set against the patient love of God who had warned them repeatedly through prophets and seers.

When the 10 tribes had been deposed, the Assyrian king attempted to repopulate the land of Israel with people from Babylon and other countries, who brought with them their own idols. Experiencing some difficulty in settling in the land, they blamed it on their ignorance of the God of Israel, and it is recorded that they "feared the Lord, and served their graven images" (17:41, KJV). This attempted religious mixture probably contributed to the enmity between the Jews and Samaritans which, centuries later, was recorded in the New Testament (see John 4). This is clear testimony to the folly of trying to mix the religion of man with divine revelation. The result is corruption worse than anything else. The Christian church can provide many examples of this principle.

While Israel was collapsing in the north, Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, began his reign in Jerusalem (chap. 18). His father had been an ungodly king, but Hezekiah, perhaps warned by the fate of Israel, began to walk wholeheartedly before the Lord. It was said of him "after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him" (18:5). The kingdom had fallen into such decay that when he came to the throne his first act, as we learn from 2 Chronicles, was to cleanse the Temple. It took the Levites 16 days to carry out all the rubbish which had collected (2 Chron. 29:17). Hezekiah also reinstated the Passover in Israel and destroyed the great brazen serpent which the people had been worshipping (2 Kings 18:4). This was the serpent God had used for their blessing when Moses erected it in the wilderness. It had become a source of idolatry just as many things which once blessed our lives become idols if we begin to hold them in too high regard.

When Hezekiah had been on the throne for 14 years, the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who had replaced Shalmaneser, invaded Judah and took certain of their fortified cities. Frightened by this, Hezekiah offered to pay tribute, and was forced to strip the gold from the Temple to meet the payment required. Undeterred by this, the Assyrian king sent his general Rabshakeh, to besiege Jerusalem. With terrible arrogance and scorn, the Assyrian general challenged, not only the might of Israel, but the power of their God to deliver them.

In desperation, Hezekiah turned to his old friend, Isaiah the prophet, who reassured the king that God was yet in control and would turn the Assyrian hosts aside, by causing them merely to "hear a rumor" (19:7). When Rabshakeh returned to learn Hezekiah's answer, he found that Sennacherib had been diverted by rumors of an attack from Ethiopia. A letter was sent to Hezekiah to warn him that the Assyrians would return, and nothing could save him from their wrath. Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord in the Temple, and in a moving prayer, called upon God for His deliverance (19:14-19).

Apparently when the Assyrians returned to the attack, Isaiah the prophet sent word to Hezekiah announcing that the Lord held Assyria and its armies in utter contempt, and by His own mighty hand would turn them back upon the way they had come. That very night an angel of the Lord entered the camp of Assyria and slew 185,000 men (19:35). Secular history records this as a great plague which swept the camp. With the remnant of his army Sennacherib departed for Nineveh, where, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, his sons slew him in the temple of his gods.

When King Hezekiah fell sick and was told he would die, he wept bitterly and besought the Lord for a reprieve (chap. 20). In response to this, his life was extended for 15 years, and as a sign, the shadow on the sundial turned back 10 degrees. In those 15 years, however, Hezekiah had a son whom he named Manasseh, who

became the worst king Judah ever had. His was the longest reign of any of the kings, extending for 55 years of ungodliness. Some have said, therefore, that Hezekiah was "the man who lived too long," for had he accepted the word of the Lord about his death, Israel would have been spared the terrible days of Manasseh. Also during these 15 years, Hezekiah received the envoys of the king of Babylon and showed to them all the treasures of the house of the Lord. For this he was severely rebuked by Isaiah, who prophesied that the things which the envoys had seen would ultimately be carried to Babylon. In due course Hezekiah died and Manasseh became king.

Manasseh's long reign of 55 years is covered in brief account, for it is said, "he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah...and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them" (21:3). His reign is summarized in these words, "Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel" (v. 9). His son, Amon, followed him to the throne, to reign for two years. He was killed in a conspiracy and his son Josiah was made king in his stead.

Josiah was eight years of age when he came to the throne (22:1). His reign marked the last attempted reformation before the kingdom would be carried into captivity. The evil state of the nation after Manasseh and Amon is seen in the fact that when King Josiah attempted to clean out the Temple and repair it a book of the Law of Moses was found within. Incredible as it may seem, neither the king nor the people seemed to know of its existence. The sacred writings had been so neglected that the actual Temple copy was lost. When this book was read to the king, his sensitive conscience was greatly distressed, and he turned for counsel to the prophetess Huldah. She responded that it was too late to save the nation from its fate, but that the reforms which the king would effect would delay the judgment of God until he had gone to his grave.

With great enthusiasm the king began his reform, first reading the book of the Law directly to the people and then making a personal covenant to walk before the Lord and keep His commandments with all his heart. The Temple was cleansed of all idolatries of the false cults, and throughout the country idolatrous priests and altars were put away (chap. 22). The reform extended even to Bethel in the north, which had been part of Israel, and the altar at Bethel which Jeroboam had erected was torn down and ground to dust.

Following this the Passover feast, which had long been neglected, was observed again in moving ritual and power (23:21-23). Homosexual prostitutes, wizards, mediums, and other abominations were swept from the land. But despite King Josiah's sincere efforts at reform, the heart of the people was not truly repentant, and when Josiah was slain in battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt and his son Jehoahaz succeeded him, the nation immediately returned to evil ways.

After a brief reign of three months, the king of Egypt deposed Jehoahaz and set his brother Eliakim, whose name he changed to Jehoiakim, upon the throne.

For 11 years Jehoiakim reigned, first as a tributary to Egypt and then for his last three years, under tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (24:1). During these years the land was torn by raiding bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites, for the long patience of God was now ended.

Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, but after a brief reign of three months Nebuchadnezzar came against the city, besieged it, and eventually overthrew it and carried off to Babylon both the people and the treasures of the city. Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon as well and his brother, Zedekiah, was set upon the throne as a vassal king in Jerusalem. In his ninth year he attempted to rebel against Babylon, and again Nebuchadnezzar came against the city and besieged it. In Zedekiah's eleventh year a breach was made in the city wall. The king was captured and blinded and sent to Babylon in chains. The house of the Lord was burned, the walls of the city broken down, and a governor was appointed over the land. When the governor was later murdered, the remnant of Israel fled to Egypt (25:26). Thus the nation which God had called and delivered from the power of Egypt, returned to that land as a scattered and suffering people.

Yet a touch of grace closes the book, for after 37 years of imprisonment in Babylon, Jehoiachin was released by Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, who showed him great kindness and permitted him to feast from the king's table for the rest of his life.

We remember that the book of Kings began with the wonderful scene of Solomon, his kingdom at peace kneeling in his royal robes, praying to the God of heaven. Contrast this with the final scene when the Temple lay in ruins, the city was destroyed and the people were slaves and bondservants in a foreign country. In this contrast we have a vivid picture of what happens in the human heart when it disobeys God. God's loving warnings are ignored for so long that God's patience draws to an end and disaster follows.

SECOND CHRONICLES 21--36

Since the record of 2 Chronicles chapters 21-36 cover the same events that we have just covered in 2 Kings it is unnecessary to repeat the story in detail. Though in general the accounts are briefer than in 2 Kings, the author of Chronicles gives more understanding of the reason events occurred. Greater detail is given of the reformation under King Hezekiah and King Josiah than in Kings, and we learn from Chronicles that Manasseh, the most wicked king of Judah, after he had been taken captive by the Assyrians and sent to Babylon, repented from his evil and turned with a whole heart to God. He was restored to his throne and in the closing years of his life accomplished certain reforms within Jerusalem. But although the king's personal repentance was genuine, and met with the gracious restoration of God, nevertheless his long years of evil had so affected the people of the nation that when his son Amon came to the throne, the evil ways of Manasseh broke out in full force again throughout the land.

The closing days of Judah and the exile into Babylon are traced in much briefer detail than in Kings, and in the closing paragraphs we learn that the reason for the 70 years of exile was in order to permit the land to enjoy its Sabbath; the nation for 490 years failed to keep the sabbatical year of rest.

An additional note of hope is struck at the very end of Chronicles when the writer recounts how the Spirit of the Lord stirred up Cyrus, the king of Persia, after the years of exile, to issue a decree to build again the house of God in Jerusalem. This lays the groundwork for the record in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and suggests perhaps that the writer of Chronicles was Ezra, the priest.

As we contemplate in these historical books the sorrowful record of the decline of the nation from its days of glory in the time of Solomon to the awful record of the exile, there are many valuable lessons to draw in the parallel experiences of our individual lives. Certain steps can be traced in the downward path of the nation.

THE PATH TO DESTRUCTION

First, there was the *self-indulgence* of Solomon, which weakened the spiritual strength of the people. Following him, Rehoboam his son turned a deaf ear to the advice of his older counselors and, it is recorded that when he was strong, "he forsook the law of the Lord." As a result, the kingdom was invaded by the Egyptians. So in our lives the moment there is a turning away from obedience to the voice of God there is an immediate weakening of the defenses of life and the enemies begin to invade.

When Jehoram followed his father Jehoshaphat to the throne, a spirit of *jealousy* in the royal family enters, and it is recorded that Jehoram slew all of his brothers with a sword and also some of the princes of Israel. Further he made high places in the hill country of Judah and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness. This too was quickly followed by invasion and by plague.

In Israel, King Ahaz introduced directly the *worship of the Baals* with their despicable practices of vile and sexual nature. Ahaz further burned his sons as offerings; immediately invasion followed from the king of Syria. We sometimes wonder why we fall prey to afflictions and oppressions, to nervous reactions, and depressive neuroses. Sometimes these are from physical causes, but often it is because the defenses of our temple are destroyed. Some inner idolatry is weakening us, and we find ourselves defenseless against the invaders of the spirit that bring on depression, frustration, defeat and darkness. So the awful account goes on, set against the continual efforts of a patient God to awaken the consciences of evil kings and correct the

practices of a stubborn and rebellious people.

THE GRACE OF GOD

By contrast, the good kings of Judah reflect the grace of God in cleansing and restoring the land and the people. There are five great reformations recorded during which God sought to arrest the deterioration of the nation and restore it to the place of glory and blessing as in the days of David. With each one, certain principles of reformation are revealed which have also application to us.

The first of these periods of reformation was under King Asa. He not only took away the foreign altars and high places, broke down the pillars, and hewed down the Asherim (a sex symbol), but also "commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to *observe the law and the commandment*" (2 Chron. 14:4, italics added).

It is not surprising, therefore, that when he was attacked by the Ethiopians with an army of a million men, the prophet Oded met him and said to him, "The Lord is with you when you are with Him" (15:2). Thus in Asa we find a determination to obey the Lord as an important principle in reformation. The way to return ends in renewal of the vow, a renewal of the determination and hunger to walk before the Lord. Immediately, there is a return to rest.

King Jehoshaphat during his reign also cleaned out the idols from the land, but in 17:7-9 a second principle of restoration is stated: "In the third year of his reign he sent his officials...*to teach in the cities in Judah...having the book of the law of the Lord with them*" (italics added). Here the great principle is that of study and teaching of the law and the Word of God.

Under King Joash we have the third principle of reformation. The main accomplishment of Joash *was to restore the Temple, and to do it required the collection of long neglected taxes*. If, as we have seen, the Temple represents the human spirit, then the repairing and restoring of it is a picture of the strengthening of the spirit. This is often accomplished by the process of restitution--the paying of that which we owe. It may be an apology to someone, or the restoring of something wrongfully taken, or putting back something which has been wrongfully used. No matter--it is an important principle of return.

In Hezekiah's reign, a fourth principle is seen in the cleansing of the Temple. The Temple was finally cleansed after 16 days of clearing out rubbish. The worship was restored and a Passover celebrated. This clearly pictures the cleansing of the Temple of our spirit by putting away the filth which has accumulated. It is to turn away from wrong ideas and concepts and attitudes to which we have given ourselves and to turn back to the cleansing of the Lord and the renewing of our minds with truth.

Then, in Josiah, the last good king of Judah, we find the final principle of restoration. His attempts to restore the worship of the Temple resulted in finding anew the book of the Law which had been lost. Josiah himself publicly read this book to the people and made a covenant to walk before the Lord and obey His commandments. Thus the final principle of restoration is *a return to the hearing of the Word of God and a determination to daily walk in its light and understanding*.

Let us never forget that as we read these books we must bear in mind the words of Paul in I Corinthians 10:11: "Now these things happened to [Israel] as an example." We have noted specific details of these from the various incidents we have covered, but even in the total picture there is a remarkable parallel.

From the very beginning of the monarchy there were two divisions within the nation. Even under David this was true, for David was king only of Judah for seven years and it was only during the last 33 years of his life that he reigned over all 12 tribes. Thus a division between the 10 tribes of the north and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south existed from the start. But though there were two sections within the nation they were intended to worship only at Jerusalem and to be under the authority of only one king. Taken as a whole, therefore, it is evident that the nation of Israel represents the divisions of our humanity.

There are clearly two divisions in us: the outer man, consisting of the body, and the inner man, consisting of

soul and spirit. But in the capital city of Jerusalem the very essence of the nation was vested in the Temple wherein the living God dwelt. We know from the Scriptures that in the human life there is not only body and soul but within the soul, so closely linked with it that only the Word of God can divide between soul and spirit, is the spirit, the dwelling place of God. Thus the temple of the Spirit was in Jerusalem and all the worship of the kingdom was to be there.

In this picture, then, the 10 tribes of the north represent the body, while the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south represent the human soul, and linked to the soul is the temple of the spirit where the Spirit of God Himself dwells. This is surely what the Lord Jesus had in mind when He said to the woman at the well of Samaria, "God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, italics added). We find many who worship him in soul, that is mere emotional worship. But God is not interested in that. He is looking for that worship which is centered in the deepest part of our nature--in the spirit.

In line with this, it is instructive to note that when the nation began to disintegrate, it was the 10 tribes of the north which fell apart first. It is amazing how early marks of sin begin to appear in the body when there is a dissolute and debauched way of life. Coarseness and vulgarity soon begin to mark the bodies of those who give themselves to overindulgence in food and drink and a debauched lifestyle. The body is the first to deteriorate, as Israel was the first to go in this record.

But Judah (depicting the soul, the personality), was next, arrested temporarily by the reformations we have noted. Ultimately, the kingdom declined until Judah too was carried away into captivity. For a few years the Temple remained in Jerusalem, but in the end it too was stripped and burned. Thus the whole record is a picture of a wasted life. It is the picture of an individual who is a Christian but who has built upon the foundation of Christ with only wood, hay and stubble. Eventually the test of fire comes and only that which cannot be burned survives.

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