

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 1

Narrator: Apostle Paul and Ezra

Primary Scriptures: Isaiah 7, 53; Colossians 1: 25-27

Story Summary: Overview of the last seven chapters of *Hebrews*.

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1050 BC - 430 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:6, 53:12; Colossians 1:25-27

The Old Testament books from *Ruth* to *Malachi* comprise about half the pages of the Bible, yet they cover only the six-century period of the kings of Israel to the return from exile in Babylon, about 1050 BC to 430 BC.

The overall history of this period is fairly easy to understand. The Israelites choose to be ruled by an earthly king instead of by God. The kings lead the Israelites to regional political power under King David, and then into a decline so severe that the nation is subjugated and taken into exile. The kings lead the people from worshiping only God to worshiping idols and the gods of the area people. Their unfaithfulness to God causes him to punish them in hopes they will decide to fulfill their covenant with him.

At the beginning of this period, the Israelites occupy and control a portion of land where we find modern-day Israel and Palestine. Under King David, the Israelites conquer and control the entire region. By the end of the period, a small number of Israelites, under the rule of the Babylonians, occupy only Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

Reading this portion of the Bible is very challenging for modern readers. The books are not in chronological order, the names of the countries and people groups are unfamiliar and numerous, and in portions of the narratives it is can be difficult to determine who is even speaking. Reading these books is made even more challenging because it is not always immediately obvious how the books are relevant to today's Christians.

One resource that many people have found helpful for study is a good chronological Bible with commentary before each section. This is a Bible where the editors have "cut and pasted" the books and chapters to place them in approximate chronological order. With this type of resource, a reader can quickly get a good understanding of this portion of the Bible, and will likely find that there are many things that not only are relevant to modern Christians, but will gain a richer context of portions of the New Testament.

One reason these books are crucial to modern Christians are their prophecies concerning Jesus. His fulfillment of these prophecies is a major reason Christians of all time periods believe in him as the Messiah.

Discussion Questions:

1. Briefly describe the mystery story that runs through the Old Testament.
2. Name some reasons it is hard for modern readers to understand many of the books from *Ruth* to *Malachi*.
3. What is the main behavioral trait of the Israelites that gets them in trouble in these books of the Bible?
4. What are the two main purposes of prophets?
5. Based on what you know now, which are the three kings in the Bible that you think are the best? Why do you have that opinion, and are you willing to change your opinion if you learn new facts about them?

1. There are many hints in the Old Testament that there will be Messiah that comes to save and restore Israel. None of the prophets could have possibly known that the Messiah would be the Son of God who would come to save all the nations, not just Israel. 2. Many of the books, and much of their content, is not in chronological order. Many of the country names are not familiar, and the enemies of Israel change over time. The names of Israel, Judah, the Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom, Samaria and other names are confusing. 3. The desire to worship other gods instead of the One True God. 4. To tell the truth, and to prophesy about future events.

Application Questions:

1. Some verses are specifically written for the nation of Israel or to a specific person. What do you think about applying those verses to your own life? An example is Jeremiah 29:11.
2. Since the Northern Kingdom ceased to exist, is there any reason to learn about it and read the prophets that were concerned with the Northern Kingdom? Why or why not?
3. Do you think you know more stories from the Old Testament or the New Testament? Does it make a difference for your faith?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Why would it be worth your effort to learn about the kings and prophets in the Old Testament?
2. Do you think that any of the Old Testament prophecies are about Jesus? If the New Testament writers had not explained that to be the case, would you have figured it out on your own? Did the Jews in the time of Jesus think the prophecies were about him?
3. Do you believe that God is still speaking through prophets today? Why or why not? If most of the Old Testament prophecies were about Jesus, what would modern-day prophecies be about? How can you know if someone today who claims to be a prophet is actually God-inspired?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 2

Narrator: Samuel and King Saul

Primary Scriptures: 1 Samuel, 1 Chronicles 1-10

Story Summary: Stories of the first prophet and first king of Israel

Location: Twelve tribes of Israel, Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1100-1010 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Samuel 7:3, 12; 8:7; 12:20-21; 15:22-23; 16:7

Samuel was the first influential prophet in the era after the judges. Although Samuel was blameless and honest in his leadership, his sons were dishonest and took bribes. To avoid having them as leaders, the elders of Israel demanded that Samuel appoint a king to lead them, like all the surrounding nations had.

God told Samuel that the people had rejected God, not Samuel. He instructed them to warn the people of all the horrible disadvantages of having a king other than God, but the people continued to insist on having a king, especially one who would lead them into battles.

God eventually had Samuel appoint Saul as king, even though his only obvious good qualities were being handsome and tall. Saul did become powerful when the Spirit of God came upon him, and he started leading the Israelites in a powerful way when he rescued the city of Jabesh from the Ammonites.

Over his forty years of rule, Saul proved to be a good king in many ways. At the time he became king, all the surrounding nations harassed and controlled the Israelites. Saul fought them off and moved Israel toward being a military power. This was a challenging task because he had to take a bunch of disorganized farmers and shepherds from twelve independent tribes and turn them into a military force capable of fighting the powerful and organized Philistines.

Although Saul had his spiritual issues, he kept the Israelites faithful to serving God, and did not lead the people into idolatry. Following the requirements of Moses, it appears Saul had one wife, did not collect much gold, and did not rely on chariots and horses. In many ways, Saul was a very good king.

However, Saul had two serious lapses in his obedience to God. Perhaps that could have been predicted since Samuel did not teach Saul how to lead his people. God regretted having made Saul the king of the Israelites.¹ Eventually, Saul's actions caused God to prohibit Saul from having a dynasty. God chose David to become the eventual replacement for Saul. Every time Saul fought against David, he fought against God. That is never a good idea.

¹ 1 Samuel 15:35

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God kept Hannah from having children for so long (1 Sam. 1:6)? Does he still do such things today?
2. What do you think 1 Samuel 3:1 and 3:21 mean? Does God send visions in today's times? How does God reveal himself in today's times?
3. 1 Samuel 7:3-4 says the Israelites were worshiping other gods, but turned back to God. They went through that cycle many times in the book of *Judges*. When will be the next time they turn to other gods?
4. 1 Samuel 13:12-13 and 18:7-9 show that Saul was disobedient in his worship and his actions. How can you keep from doing the same?
5. What do you think about 1 Samuel 16:14? How could Saul resist the Lord's will?

3. About a century later when Solomon leads them into idolatry. 4. Be very sure of how God wants to be worshiped, and then follow that completely. Be careful not to worship in a way that makes sense to you, but is not Biblical.

Application Questions:

1. Hannah vowed to dedicate her child to God before she got pregnant. When he was weaned, she took him to Samuel to be raised by the priests. How hard was that for her to do? Have you ever made a difficult vow to God? Did you keep it?
2. 1 Samuel 8:7 reveals that the people were rejecting God when they asked to have a king like the countries around them. Have you ever rejected God by trying to be like the people around you? Did you realize what you were doing?
3. 1 Samuel 13:3-5 is an indication of how righteous Samuel was in his behavior. Would you like to have that kind of a reputation when you are old? How do you get that kind of a reputation?
4. 1 Samuel 15:7 says God does not judge by appearances. Do you?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read 1 Samuel 6:19. Was God being too harsh? If you knew you were going to get similarly punished when you misbehaved, would you be less likely to misbehave? How do you square this with the gift of grace through Christ?
2. 1 Samuel 8 is the story of the Israelites wanting a king so they could be like the nations around them. God warned them about the results of getting what they wanted, but they refused to listen to God's wise advice. Do you remember a time when you wanted to be like everybody else? How did that turn out?
3. Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23. How do those verses apply to you?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 3

Narrator: King David and Nathan

Primary Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 12, 1 Chronicles 11-19

Story Summary: David and Goliath, David as king, Bathsheba

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1050-970 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Samuel 17:47. 2 Samuel 6:7; 11:1

Perhaps it might be helpful to think about David's life in four segments: youth, early adulthood before becoming king, first half of kingship, and second half of kingship.

David's first occupation is as a shepherd. He probably starts before he is ten years old, likely as an apprentice. For the next several years, he spends time in solitude protecting the sheep and enjoying nature. It is during this time that he learns to use a sling and staff, play a harp, and compose songs and poems. It is also during this time that he is secretly anointed to be a future king, and the Spirit of God comes upon him powerfully...and stays upon him.¹

Although the timing of events is uncertain, the second segment of David's life starts when he takes his brothers some lunch. Before the trip is over, he kills Goliath and takes the giant's bloody head to Jerusalem. He goes into the service of Saul, where he becomes a mighty warrior. As Saul becomes more and more paranoid, David is forced to run for his life. He lives in the countryside and forms a small army. He avoids Saul, gathers support from the common people, and lives among the Philistines long enough to learn about them and their methods of warfare. This part of his life ends when Saul and Jonathan are killed and David becomes the second king of Israel.

The third segment of David's life is a little harder to fathom from the Biblical accounts. It starts when the elders of the tribes of Israel agree to accept David as king. They continue to keep their individual tribal identities, but unite under his leadership. He systematically overcomes the historical enemies of Israel, as well as all of its neighboring nations. He subjugates and exacts tribute from the Philistines, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Arameans. When David is through, he controls the land and trade routes from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

This third segment ends about the time David completes his conquests. When he stops participating in the battles, he stays behind in Jerusalem and succumbs to the temptation of the wife of one of his warriors. He has an affair with Bathsheba that will have long-lasting ramifications for his family and the entire nation, especially during the second half of his kingship.

¹ 1 Samuel 16:13

Discussion Questions:

1. 1 Samuel 16:13 tells of David getting anointed as a future king by Samuel. How long would it be before he became king? When do you think Saul found out about David's anointing?
2. 1 Samuel 17:54 says that David took Goliath's head to Jerusalem. Why do you think he did that?
3. 1 Samuel 25 tells the story of Abigail. David ends up marrying her, but he was already married to Ahinoam and Michal. How could David be a man after God's heart if he willingly became a bigamist? How would his decision play out in Solomon's life?
4. 1 Samuel 27:6 says that David lived among the Philistines. Why might that have proven to be a good thing for David?
5. 1 Samuel tells of the witch bringing up Samuel from the dead. Where was Samuel, and how could she bring him back?
6. 2 Samuel 2:4 says the people of Judah crowned David king. Why only Judah?

1. David was thirty when he became king. He was probably 10-15 years old when he was anointed. We don't know when Saul found out. 4. He might have gathered intelligence about their military methods, their leaders, and their economy. 6. David was of the tribe of Judah, they were in the territory of Judah, and the other tribes were still united under Saul's son.

Application Questions:

1. David probably waited more than fifteen years between his anointing and his kingship. Could you be that patient for something you really wanted? What would you do while you wait?
2. 1 Samuel 17:12 says Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him. Saul's son, Jonathan, was David's best friend. Do you tend to want to be around godly people or stay away from them?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. In 1 Samuel 21:2, David obviously lied to the priest. His lie resulted in the entire family of the priest being killed by Saul. Is it ever right to tell a lie? Have you ever told a lie that you thought was unimportant but it resulted in a lot of damage?
2. 1 Samuel 24:6 tells of David being unwilling to harm Saul because he was God's anointed king. Have you ever purposefully tried to harm the reputation or situation of a person who was in authority because God placed them there?
3. Read 2 Samuel 8. Do the things in that chapter sound like something God would want David to do?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 4

Narrator: Nathan and Tamar

Primary Scriptures: 2 Samuel 13-24

Story Summary: David's family and its struggles

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1020-970 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Samuel 14:24, 17:14, 18:33, 24:14

David was famous for being a great warrior and king, but he could be equally famous for presiding over a dysfunctional family.

It's understandable, as David himself came from a somewhat dysfunctional family. He was the youngest of eight brothers and was sent to work as a shepherd at a young age. His brothers despised him, and his father had no time for him.

David's first wife was Michal, the daughter of his enemy, King Saul. Saul took her back from David, though eventually she returned. When she made fun of David for some of his actions, she was punished by remaining childless for her entire life.

While an outlaw in exile, David married again to Ahinoam, and sometime later, he married Abigail, the widow of Nabal. He eventually married a total of at least eight wives and had numerous concubines. From these wives and concubines, he had numerous children. This set the stage for following kings of Israel to have numerous wives.

It takes little imagination to figure out there were innumerable conflicts among the wives and children, especially when it came to determining which child would succeed David as king. The Bible gives the clear impression that David handled all of these conflicts by not handling them, ignoring them as much as possible.

Early on, it appears that everyone assumed the oldest son would inherit the throne. That assumption came into question when that son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar. Absalom, the brother of the half-sister, killed Amnon in revenge. Absalom was forced into exile, which confused things more because he was possibly the next in line by age.

When Absalom was allowed to return to Jerusalem, he overthrew David. In a subsequent battle, Absalom was killed and David returned as king. The next son in line, Adonijah, also attempted to usurp the throne, but was unsuccessful. Due to David's growing age and weakness, others outside of the family also tried to usurp the throne.

Somewhat out of the blue, one of David's eight wives, the infamous Bathsheba, came back into the picture. She used her wiles and influence to get David to designate one of her many sons, Solomon, as the successor to the throne. This ended the question of succession, but certainly did not end the long-term dysfunction in the House of David.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the indications that David's family was likely to have a significant amount of dysfunction?
2. 2 Samuel 13 does not place the story of Amnon and Tamar in time, but it appears to have happened well into David's kingship. Does it seem to you that David was so involved with being king that he didn't manage his family well?
3. David clearly had a blind spot when it came to Absalom. How did that work to the disadvantage of both Absalom and David?
4. Read 2 Samuel 24. Why did David sin in counting his fighting men? Why did he want to do so?

1. David came from a family that had dysfunction. He was the youngest son that appears to have been almost ignored by his parents, and was taunted by his older brothers. He had children by many wives and concubines. Whenever his children misbehaved, he did not punish them appropriately. David had favorites among his wives and children. 3. David did not discipline Absalom, so he did whatever he wanted and did not respect David. David could not see that Absalom was treacherous and dangerous, and that he hated David. 4. It showed that he did not trust God to protect Israel, and it showed his pride.

Application Questions:

1. Amnon was highly valued because he was the first son of David, and was likely slated to take his place. Tamar was not highly valued simply because she was a woman. What standards do you use to value children and friends?
2. Absalom's conspiracy against David failed because he trusted the wrong advisor. How do you choose your advisors? Do you prefer advisors who generally agree with your opinion or those who have their own opinions? Why?
3. In 2 Samuel 19, Joab chastises David for lamenting Absalom, who had rebelled against David and almost killed him. What lesson can you learn from Joab's well-deserved chastisement of David? In what ways might Joab have been too harsh?

Applications Questions for Teens:

1. David clearly had favorites among his wives and children. In modern times, what causes parents to have favorites among their children? What precautions could parents take to make sure they don't have favorites? Do you have a favorite parent? Why or why not?
2. Are you more likely to listen to the opinions of celebrities or to the opinions of your parents? Would you more likely listen to the advice of your parents or to your schoolteachers? Why do you suppose you prefer some advisors over others?
3. Read 2 Samuel 22. What can you learn about the nature of God from David's praise?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 5

Narrator: Ruth

Primary Scriptures: *Ruth*

Story Summary: Ruth goes to Israel, Ruth meets and marries Boaz

Location: Moab, Israel

Time: Circa 1100 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Ruth 1:16-17; 2:12; 4:14

Now that the importance of David has been established, this episode takes a step back in time to tell the story of David's paternal great-grandmother, Ruth. She is listed as an ancestor of David and Jesus in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *Luke*.

Ruth was from the nearby country of Moab; she was not an Israelite by birth. She became an Israelite when she married one of the two sons of Naomi. Naomi and her husband had previously moved to Moab to escape a famine in Israel. The fact that Ruth was from Moab may have been influential in David's ability to sequester his parents with the King of Moab when David was being chased by Saul.¹

Before Ruth or her sister-in-law could have children, Naomi's husband and her two sons died. Naomi was despondent and decided to go back to Israel, leaving the two young women behind in their home country to find new husbands. Ruth was so dedicated and faithful to her mother-in-law that she chose to go with her to Israel to live with her and to accept her God.

Completely impoverished, Naomi and Ruth moved to Bethlehem, the ancestral home of Naomi and her husband. It was the time of the barley harvest, so they took advantage of the commandments of Moses and harvested the scraps in a field owned by Boaz, a wealthy man.

Two pieces of good fortune immediately came into play. Boaz was attracted to Ruth, and it was discovered that Boaz was a relative of Naomi's dead husband. Always acting a gentleman, Boaz protected Ruth and made sure she collected a lot of barley. Naomi schemed for Ruth to attract Boaz, but her scheming was unneeded.

Boaz used a local tradition to attain the rights to take care of Naomi. From there it was a simple task for him to be able to marry Ruth. They quickly had a son, who turned out to be the grandfather of King David.

Although the book of *Ruth* is not a directly a book about God, it is a book about mercy, love, and restoration. It shows that God cares about both men and women, Jews and non-Jews, rich and poor. Boaz's role as a kinsman-redeemer is a symbol that his descendant, Jesus, will also be a kinsman-redeemer.

¹ 1 Samuel 22:3-4

Discussion Questions:

1. The first phrase in the book of *Ruth* is, "In the days when the judges ruled." What is the significance of this phrase?
 2. Ruth 1:2 says that the family of Elimelek were Ephrathites. What is an Ephrathite?
 3. When the famine hit, Elimelek's family went to Moab. Was that a wise choice?
 4. Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer of Naomi. What does that mean? Is it a foreshadowing of Jesus?
1. This story takes place near the end of the period of the judges, and is a transition to the time of the kings and prophets. 2. People descended from the wife of Caleb and mother of Hur, Ephrathah. These people lived near Ephrath, later called Bethlehem. It does not mean they were of the tribe of Ephraim. They were of the tribe of Judah. 3. The Moabites and Israelites were ancient enemies. The Moabites worshiped other gods, so Elimelek was exposing his family to that worship. That was especially dangerous because his sons would likely want to be married soon, and it was prohibited for them to marry Moabites. 4. The notion of a kinsman-redeemer is found in Leviticus 25. In the case of a man dying and not leaving any sons, the brother is supposed to take the widow as his wife so that she can have a son to inherit the land and carry on the family name. By laying at his feet, Ruth asked Boaz to fulfill that role. Most people think the story of Ruth is an indication of Jesus being our redeemer.

Application Questions:

1. Naomi wanted her Moabite daughters-in-law to stay in Moab because she knew they would be unlikely to marry any Israelites when they went to Bethlehem. Are you able to make hard decisions for the benefit of others even when it is to your detriment?
2. Ruth 1:15 is a famous verse. Ruth is declaring her determination to support her mother-in-law even when it is to Ruth's disadvantage. How many times in your life have you had to make long-term decisions that bind you to a potentially unfavorable situation? Were you glad you did so? Do you admire others who do so?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to Ruth 2:7 and 2:11, why do you think Boaz was first attracted to Ruth? After working in the fields all day, do you think she looked and smelled good?
2. Why did Boaz instruct his workers to aid Ruth in Ruth 2:15-16? (So she could prosper without having her pride hurt or feeling she was under obligation to him). Are you sensitive to the needs of others like Boaz was?
3. Ruth 3:10 shows Boaz's reaction to Ruth asking him to marry her. Apparently, he was a fair amount older than her, and did not consider himself worthy of her. How important are age and looks in your relationships? Will it always be that way? At what age do you think people start considering other factors when they want to have a relationship?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 6

Narrator: Mary

Primary Scriptures: *Psalms*

Story Summary: Narration about the book of *Psalms*

Location: Israel

Time: Circa 1000-900 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Psalms 1:1-2; 8:3-4, 9; 19:7-9, 14; 22:16-18; 23; 34:15-16; 119:9-11, 18

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Before Ruth or her sister-in-law could have children, Naomi's husband and her two sons died. Naomi was despondent and decided to go back to Israel, leaving the two young women behind in their home country to find new husbands. Ruth was so dedicated and faithful to her mother-in-law that she chose to go with her to Israel to live with her and to accept her God.

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Application Questions:

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Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 7

Narrator: King David

Primary Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5, 1 Chronicles 11

Story Summary: David conquers Jebus, importance of Jerusalem

Location: Jerusalem

Time: Circa 1010 BC David conquers Jebus

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5:3, 5:9, 5:13; 1 Chron. 11:6

There is no city like Jerusalem. It is a sacred site for the three major religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It has long been known as the City of God.

The likely first mention of Jerusalem was when Abraham met Melchizedek, the king of Salem, as in Jeru-Salem.¹ The first specific mention is when Joshua and the Israelites confront the king of Jerusalem.² Shortly thereafter, Jerusalem is identified to be the same city as Jebus.³

With that information, Jebusites are mentioned in *Genesis to Judges*. In the book of *Judges*, it is not clear whether the Israelites did or did not conquer Jebus, or if they conquered it for a short period of time. It is also not clear whether the people of Judah or Benjamin were to conquer the city, but it was most likely Judah.

Imagine David as a shepherd boy, tending sheep a few miles away from Bethlehem, sometimes almost in the shadow of Jerusalem. It must have rankled him that his own tribe could not defeat that one hilltop city. It must have goaded him to the point that the first thing he did after killing Goliath was to take his bloody head to Jerusalem as a warning.⁴

David lived in Hebron when he first became king of the Israelites. One of King David's first actions was to attack Jebus/Jerusalem and take it for his own personal possession...the City of David. He used the city as one of the rallying points of uniting the twelve tribes under his kingship.

More importantly, God chose Jerusalem to be his own city,⁵ with his home to be in the Temple. Even though God chose to leave the Temple and the city, he never quite gave it up. Jesus had a special place in his heart for Jerusalem, shown many times. It continues to be special, too. Jesus will come back to Jerusalem in his Second Coming, and all of God's people spend eternity in a place called a New Jerusalem.⁶

Discussion Questions:

¹ Genesis 14:18

² Joshua 10

³ Joshua 15:8

⁴ 1 Samuel 17:54

⁵ Hebrews 12:22

⁶ Acts 1:11, Rev. 21:2-10

1. What are some of the names that refer to Jerusalem?
2. What tribe inhabited the city of Jerusalem?
3. Why was Jebus so hard to conquer?
4. How was Jebus conquered by David and his army?
5. Why was it important for David to conquer Jebus?
6. What were the ties of Abraham to Jerusalem?
7. Jerusalem was God's City because he allowed Solomon to build the Temple there, and he inhabited the Temple. Based on the actions of the kings and people of Israel, God allowed the city and Temple to be destroyed (more than once), and he no longer inhabited it. Why should Christians and Jews still consider Jerusalem to be important? What did Jesus think about Jerusalem?

1. Jerusalem, Jebus, City of David, City of God, Zion, possibly Salem 2. Benjamin originally owned it, but it seems to have been controlled by Judah at a later date. 3. It had steep ravines and walls on three sides, and a big wall on the north side. It had its own water supply so it could withstand a siege until it ran out of food. 4. Some versions of the Bible imply that they came through a water shaft, but it is not perfectly clear how Joab led his men to victory. 5. David needed a new capital that would help him unite the tribes of Israel under his command. By starting fresh, he did not have to contend with old rivalries. Jebus was a ready-made city that was secure and central to much of the country. 7. It's possibly where he met Melchizedek. It's traditionally thought of as the place on Mount Moriah where Abraham took Isaac.

Application Questions:

1. David promised the command of his troops to whoever conquered Jerusalem. Was that a rash promise? Is that the way a commander should be chosen? Have you ever made a rash promise that you were compelled to keep? How did that work out?
2. Jerusalem was considered God's City because he chose to live there when the Temple was built by Solomon. Based on the actions of the Israelites, God left the Temple and allowed the city to be destroyed. Have you ever had something valuable that was destroyed because you did not love it?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. David daily saw Jebus in the distance when he was a teenager, knew of its history, and took Goliath's head there. He clearly had dreams about conquering Jebus when he was your age. What are your dreams for conquering something big? What are you doing to work toward accomplishing those dreams?
2. What would Jesus think about the contention of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims over the city of Jerusalem? If you had the sole power, what would you do about who controls the Temple Mount and Jerusalem today?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 8

Narrator: Solomon

Primary Scriptures: 1 Kings 1-11, 2 Chronicles 1-9

Story Summary: Solomon becomes king, marries many foreign wives

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: 970-930 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Kings 2:2-3; 3:3, 9; 4:34; 6:11-13; 8:9; 9:8-9; 11:6

Family Issues. Extenuating circumstances. Excuses. King Solomon had all of those by the truckload. He overcame some of those types of things, but not many.

Solomon's father was King David. David had murdered the first husband of Solomon's mother just to cover up the fact that he had gotten her pregnant during an affair, a horrible sin made worse by the fact Bathsheba's husband was a prized warrior away fighting for David. God punished David by allowing that baby to die at birth.

Although it isn't perfectly clear, it is possible that Bathsheba was the last of David's eight wives; Solomon was the oldest of her living children and tenth of David's living sons. Solomon was part of the deadly competition to become David's successor. Through Bathsheba's persuasion, David chose Solomon as his successor, and elevated Solomon to kingship before he died.

Following David's instructions, Solomon quickly eliminated his enemies and consolidated his power. Solomon would rule Israel for forty years, just as his father did.

Solomon's rule continued the Golden Age of Israel. He expanded the borders, kept political peace with other countries, and continued growing the wealth of the kingship and the country. He was known around the world for being wise and wealthy. With God's support, he built the fabulous Temple in Jerusalem. These are the things he is most known for in modern time.

Like the man in Jesus's parable, Solomon built his greatness on a foundation of sand, and after his death it will collapse with a crash. To support his public building projects, he had to conscript labor and raise taxes to a high level. Rather than depending on God for protection, Solomon chose to make costly treaties and marry children of potential enemies. He must have thought he had a lot of enemies to mollify.

Much like his father before him, Solomon married multiple women, but he took it to an entirely new level. He married 700 foreign princesses and had 300 concubines. Solomon began worshiping the many gods of his wives, and so set the stage for the country of Israel to fall into idolatry, thus violating their covenant with God. The country would never recover from this violation, and it would be the eventual cause for the destruction of the country and its special relationship with God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Prior to watching this video episode, how did you perceive of King Solomon? Did you realize that he ruled for forty years, and that he radically changed over that long period of time?
2. Why did Solomon choose to have so many wives and concubines?
3. Do you think that worshiping the gods of his wives and concubines was a sideline of his marriages, or a major part of them?
4. In Deuteronomy 17:14-19, Moses said that the kings of Israel should not have many wives, much gold or acquire many horses. Why would he have said that hundreds of years before Israel had kings?

2. He wanted to establish political alliances with other countries and kings. He likely wanted to enjoy the sexual favors of his wives and concubines, and possibly started enjoying worshiping their foreign gods. 3. 2 Kings 23:13 indicates that Solomon had a massive building program to worship foreign gods since some of those facilities still existed hundreds of years later. 4. Those types of things would turn the hearts of the kings away from God, and keep them from trusting God to provide and protect them and the country. Horses from Egypt would require the Israelites to go back to Egypt where they had been enslaved, and to have dependence on the Egyptians.

Application Questions:

1. Solomon was certainly affected by the negative actions of his father and mother. How have you been affected by your parents' actions and emotions? What have you done to overcome any negative influences they may have had over you? How have you taken advantage of the positive influences they had over you? In what ways have you tried to mitigate this in your own kids' lives?
2. By forming political alliances by marrying the daughters of his potential enemies, Solomon demonstrated that he did not trust God to protect and provide for him and his country. Are there ways that you demonstrate you do not trust God to provide and protect you?
3. Solomon had to build entire cities to house his horses and chariots. Do you have to spend inordinate amounts of money or time to maintain some of the things you own or activities you do?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. In common use, what does the saying, "split the baby" mean? How does that relate to the story of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:16-28?
2. Why do you think Solomon quit following God?
3. How do you think Solomon got along with his many half-brothers and other relatives? Do you think his relatives trusted Solomon's mother?
4. How do you think someone so wise could act so foolishly when it came to relationships?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 9

Narrator: Son of Korah

Primary Scriptures: *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*

Story Summary: Brief description of the *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs* **Location:** Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1050-930 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Proverbs 1:7; 3:5-7, 13-14, 27-28; 4:23; 6:10-11; 8:11; 10:2. Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, 10-11; 2:24-25; 3:1, 12-13, 22; 4:12; 5:10; 9:11; 11:2; 12:1, 13-14

Many people attribute *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and most of Proverbs* to King Solomon. Possibly this stems from 1 Kings 4:32, which says about King Solomon, “He spoke three thousand parables and his songs numbered a thousand and five.” He was known world-wide for his far-reaching knowledge and wisdom.

Proverbs 1 and 10 begin by specifying they are the proverbs of Solomon. Proverbs 22:17 says they are thirty sayings of the wise, and then other attributions begin being given, including to Solomon.

There are many themes that run through Proverbs, including: the importance of wisdom, the folly of adultery and prostitution, and the value of family relationships. Since Solomon likely violated many of his proverbs in his later life, it would be incredibly interesting to know at which point in his life each proverb was written. As Solomon points out, following the proverbs is the wise thing to do. They are not commandments from God, but rather are wise pieces of guidance from a multitude of wise people.

Ecclesiastes is commonly attributed to Solomon, although the text itself says it is written by the Teacher. The main message is that all of life is meaningless or insubstantial because death takes everybody to the same zero level. Most of the book is narrated by a third person who is talking about the Teacher. Toward the end, the voice changes to that of the Teacher, so it leads you to believe the Teacher was narrating his own life, making sense of the thought that Solomon wrote it.

The narrator indicates he is talking about a king who has experienced everything, so he knows what he is talking about. Except for the last verse, the book has little to do with God, and is rather sad. Many people believe the last two verses were added at a later date than the rest of the book.

Song of Songs, or Solomon’s Song of Songs, is a love poem voiced through three parties: he, she, and friends. “He” is often identified as a royal prince, possibly Solomon. “She” is his lover and fiancé. Many people read this writing as an allegory of God and the Israelites, or Jesus and his church.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are proverbs, and what are they good for? Are proverbs commandments that must be followed?
2. What does Proverbs 4:23 mean? How can you follow it?
3. Do you think Ecclesiastes should be considered as wisdom saying to be observed, or the observations of an older man about how he sees life?
4. What does Proverbs 6:16-19 mean? Are those still true today, or do you think there are other things that have taken their place?
5. What does Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 mean to you?
6. Is Ecclesiastes 3:22 true for you?
7. Does Ecclesiastes 7:15 go against Christian principles, or does it fit them?
8. Why do you think Song of Songs is in the Bible?

1. Proverbs 1:1-6 explains that proverbs are sayings and riddles of the wise. They are good for gaining wisdom, instruction, understanding, and prudence. Proverbs are not commandments that must be followed.

Application Questions:

1. According to Proverbs 2:5-6, what does wisdom consist of, and who gives wisdom? Do you seek wisdom from God or from other sources? Are you typically seeking wisdom, knowledge or entertainment? According to Proverbs 4:7, how valuable is wisdom? Compare these to Proverbs 9:10.
2. How can you enact Proverbs 3:27-28 in your life?
3. What does Proverbs 6:1 mean? Have you ever guaranteed someone else's loan or business deal? Would you do it again?
4. Is Ecclesiastes 1:2 meant to be a true statement, or a declaration that sets up the discussions in the rest of the book?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to Proverbs 3:5-7, should you trust in your own understanding or in the ways of God? If you are attracted to evil things or ways, what should you do?
2. According to Proverbs 3:11-12, does a wise parent discipline a child or let it do what it wants? Are there ways this proverb could be misinterpreted?
3. Would you rather have lots of money, be popular at school, or have wisdom?
4. What does Proverbs 4:24 mean?
5. Do you think Ecclesiastes 5:10 is true? If so, why do many people envy rich people so much?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 10

Narrator: Rehoboam and Jeroboam

Primary Scriptures: 1 Kings 11-14, 2 Chronicles 10-12

Story Summary: Split of Israel into the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdoms **Location:** Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom

Time: 930-915 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Kings 11:4, 11:6; 12:8; 12:19, 12:28; 13:34; 14:22

This episode sets the stage for the rest of the *Kings and Prophets Series*. 1 Kings 11 describes Solomon's later life and how he fell into idolatry by worshiping the gods of his foreign wives. By building temples and shrines to these false gods, Solomon led the whole Israelite nation into idolatry. Obviously, this angered God, so God started setting the stage to discipline the Israelites in hopes they would return to him.

As soon as Rehoboam inherited the crown from Solomon, he realized the country was in trouble. He needed to raise taxes to continue the public projects, but his subjects did not want that. When he aggressively pressed the issue, ten of the tribes of Israel rebelled and went off on their own, rallying under the leadership of Solomon's enemy, Jeroboam. From that point on, there were two nations.

The southern nation was made up of two tribes of Israel: Judah and the tiny tribe of Benjamin. These became known as the Southern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah, or Judah. The first king of this nation was King Rehoboam. One of the most important assets of the Southern Kingdom was Jerusalem, including the Temple located there. The kings of the Southern Kingdom will be descendants of King David. It is the Southern Kingdom that will eventually go into exile in Babylon, and return from there.

The northern nation was made up of the remaining ten tribes of Israel. These became known as the Northern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel, or Samaria. Sound confusing? That's because it is! And its capital was sometimes at the city of Samaria. The first king was King Jeroboam. Since the Temple was located in the Southern Kingdom, King Jeroboam set up alternate worship locations and worship methods in several areas. The Northern Kingdom will eventually get destroyed by the Assyrians in about 722 BCE, and its people will be scattered among the nations. They will become known as the Lost Tribes of Israel.

The two kingdoms self-destructed in some part because they wasted resources fighting each other. More importantly, they self-destructed because they continued worshiping idols and false gods instead of the one true God of their ancestors.

Discussion Questions:

1. According to 1 Kings 11:1-3, why did Solomon marry seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines?
2. How might 1 Kings 11:4 impact your view of Solomon?
3. According to 1 Kings 11:7-8, how deeply did Solomon fall into idolatry?
4. According to 1 Kings 11:26-40, how did Jeroboam come into importance?
5. Was God surprised when Rehoboam made a bad decision that split the kingdom?
6. According to 1 Kings 12: 21, what two tribes will comprise the Southern Kingdom?

1. He “loved” many women, which probably means he lusted after them. They were of royal birth, so he was marrying them to improve his foreign relations with other countries. Many of them were women of countries that were expressly forbidden for him to marry, so he may have gotten some perverse satisfaction from disobeying God. 2. As he aged, he quit withstanding some temptations, and completely fell into idolatry. 3. He built thousands of idols and places of worship for foreign gods. According to 2 Kings 23:13, many of these lasted for hundreds of years. 4. God put him in importance in order to prepare him to take away part of Solomon’s kingdom. 5. No. According to 1 Kings 12:15, he was acting as God knew he would. 6. Judah and Benjamin. That’s how Jerusalem ended up being in the Southern Kingdom.

Application Questions:

1. What might be some implications of 1 Kings 11:4 to what temptations happen to men as they age? Do these same temptations happen to women as they age?
2. According to 1 Kings 11:38, God gave Jeroboam the same conditional promise to have an everlasting dynasty as he gave to David and Solomon. What conditional promise(s) has God given to you that could incentivize you to be obedient to him?
3. Rehoboam did not take the advice of his experienced advisors. What types of people do you tend to take advice from? Do you take more advice from celebrities and television personalities than you should?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to 1 Kings 11:4, Solomon started worshiping other gods because of his many wives and concubines. When you are around friends who believe differently than you, are you more likely to start thinking the way they do, or for them to start thinking like you? Is it dangerous to have many friends who do not believe in God?
2. According to 1 Kings 12:8-12, Rehoboam rejected the advice of experienced people and took the advice of his inexperienced friends. How did that work out for Rehoboam? How does it work out for you when you take the advice of friends who are not experienced and wise?
3. According to 1 Kings 12:26, why did Rehoboam immediately quit obeying God after he became king? How did he rationalize his decision? Do you rationalize the times you are disobedient to God?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 11

Narrator: King Ahab and Elijah

Primary Scriptures: 1 Kings 15 – 2 Kings 1

Story Summary: The Northern Kingdom and life of Elijah

Location: Northern Kingdom

Time: 910-850 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Kings 15:29-30; 17:1; 18:27; 19:12-13, 19:18; 2 Kings 1:1

King Ahab was the seventh king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The first six were Jeroboam 1, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri. Ahab was the son of Omri, and the husband of Jezebel.

The first king, Jeroboam 1 led his kingdom deep into idolatry. As prophesied, his entire family was destroyed.

Jeroboam's son, Nadab, was the second king. He ruled only two years, and followed in his father's footsteps by committing the same sins.

Baasha came from a different tribe and family, rebelled against Nadab and killed him. He also destroyed all of the descendants of Jeroboam and Nadab. Baasha reigned for 24 years, and he continued in the same sins of idolatry.

Elah was the son of Baasha, and he reigned for two years. One of his trusted officials, Zimri, got him drunk and assassinated him.

Zimri took over the kingdom. He reigned over the Northern Kingdom for about a week before the commander of the army, Omri, assassinated him.

Omri immediately eliminated his enemies and took firm control over the Northern Kingdom for twelve years. Half of his reign was out of Tirzah, and second in his city of Samaria. Omri was more evil than the kings before him, and continued leading the people of the Northern Kingdom to worship worthless idols.

Ahab, a son of Omri, took the kingship of the Northern Kingdom for twenty-two years. He took evil to a new level. He not only worshiped the idols of the previous kings, but married the foreigner Jezebel, and began worshipping her god, Baal, and set up an Asherah pole. He aroused the anger of God more than the kings before him.¹

The actions of Ahab and Jezebel set up the well-known contest with Elijah the prophet. Elijah is the subject of many of the well-known stories of the Old Testament. Yet, as powerful as Elijah was, his warnings did not deter the kings of the Northern Kingdom from continuing in their idol worship. The demise of the Northern Kingdom was accelerated by the rebellion of the vassal countries that David had conquered.

¹ 1 Kings 16:32

Discussion Questions:

1. The book of 1 Kings includes accounts of the kings of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Do you find it hard to keep track of what is going on with which country? Since the Northern Kingdom will be destroyed and go out of existence, why did the writers include their kings in the narrative?
 2. From a spiritual standpoint, did the Northern Kingdom have any good kings? What would be your basis on making that evaluation?
 3. According to 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah prophesied to King Ahab that it would not rain for a few years. Do you think he also told him this would happen because of his evil actions? How much courage would have taken for Elijah to tell a king this dire prophecy?
 4. 1 Kings 17 describes God intervening in very intimate ways in the lives of people. Do you perceive that God still does this today? If so, do you perceive he does it in your life, or just in lives of others?
2. They were all described as being evil because they led their country in worshiping false gods and idols. Most of their descendants were killed because of their sins.

Application Questions:

1. 1 Kings 15:29-30 says Jeroboam's whole family was destroyed because of the sins Jeroboam committed and according the prophecy given by the Lord through Abijah. Do you often consider the consequences your actions might have on your family? Do you think your actions are known by the Lord ahead of time?
2. 1 Kings 16:34 says that Hiel rebuilt Jericho, and this action cost the lives of his sons according to the prophecy given by Joshua. Have you ever let your earthly ambitions harm your family members? If you are currently doing that, are you willing to stop?
3. 1 Kings 18:13 says that Obadiah saved the lives of 100 prophets of God, at great danger to himself. 1 Kings 19:18 says God reserved 7,000 people to worship him. Do you ever feel sorry for yourself because it seems there are not very many true God-believers left? Do you think you really know how many there are? What are you willing to do to make God-believers and preserve the ones who already exist?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. All of the family members of Jeroboam and Baasha were wiped out because of their sins. How have you seen the behaviors of your parents or the parents of your friends have a good or bad long-term effect on their families?
2. 1 Kings 16:13 says that Baasha and Elah aroused the anger of the Lord because they worshiped worthless idols. Do you have any worthless idols in your life that you are committed to? (note: an idol might be video games, clothes, popularity or anything else that you are devoted to)

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 12

Narrator: Jehu, Elisha, slave girl

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 2-10

Story Summary: Northern Kingdom during time of Elisha

Location: Northern Kingdom

Time: 848-797 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Kings 2:9; 4:4, 43-44; 5:13; 10:31

The demise of the Northern Kingdom continued with the kings following Ahab. The next three were Ahaziah, Jehoram (also known as Joram), and Jehu.

Ahaziah was the son of King Ahab, and he reigned only two years. Elijah prophesied that his death would occur because of his worship of idolatry. This was one of the last known acts of Elijah, the most powerful of all the many prophets in Israel..

Upon Elijah's mysterious death, Elisha became the main prophet. Elisha's ministry occurred during the reigns of Jehoram and Jehu. Some of the most well-known stories about the prophets in the Hebrew Bible have to do with Elisha, such as the story of the widow and the olive oil, or the story of the healing of Naaman, the leper.

A story that is less well-known is the time Elisha fed a hundred prophets with twenty barley loaves and had bread left over.¹ Surely the people in the crowd hundreds of years later would have thought of that story when Jesus fed the five thousand.

It was during the reign of Ahaziah that Moab rebelled. Moab had been a vassal state of Israel ever since King David had conquered it. This rebellion was double trouble for Israel. Moab quit paying tribute to Israel and started becoming an enemy that was expensive to contend with. Moab quickly became a terrifying enemy.

Upon Ahaziah's death, another of Ahab's sons became king. That son was known as Jehoram or Joram, and he continued in the ways of his father's idolatry. He understood the problems associated with Moab's rebellion, so he decided to end the rebellion. He enlisted the help of the kings of Judah and Edom. God chose to bless the endeavor, and the Moabites were defeated. However, not long afterward, Edom successfully rebelled against Israel.

God raised up Jehu to replace Joram, and to wipe out the entire family of Ahab and Jezebel. God had high hopes for Jehu to eliminate idolatry in the Northern Kingdom. He did wipe out some of it, but did not eliminate it completely. Therefore, the Northern Kingdom stayed on course for its total destruction.

¹ 2 Kings 4:42-44

Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Kings 2:10-11 describes Elijah being taken alive into heaven. What is one possible ramification of this?
2. The healing of the water event in 2 Kings 2:19-22 seems a little odd. What might the story signify?
3. What is the significance of Moab rebelling against Israel in 2 Kings 3:5?
4. What is a possible significance of the story in 2 Kings 4:42-44?
5. 2 Kings 9:13 describes the army officers quickly changing loyalty. Why might they have done that so quickly?

1. Matthew 17:1-13 describes the Mount of Transfiguration where Moses and Elijah appeared. 2. It appears this water existed near the town of Jericho which had been placed under a curse by Joshua. When Elisha healed the waters, the curse may have been lifted. 3. Since David had conquered the countries around Israel, they had been forced to pay heavy tribute. From this time on, these countries would not only quit paying tribute, but would cause Israel great expense for national defense. 4. The people at the feeding of 5,000 would have likely thought of this story, and considered Jesus to be a great prophet. 5. They may have been tired of serving an evil king and queen, and pleased to have the chance to be with a ruler who was ordained by God.

Application Questions:

1. In 2 Kings 5:11, Naaman demonstrated great pride. This pride almost cost him a great healing. Has your pride ever cost you a lot? Might you have acted differently if you had had wise advisors in your life? Do you actively try to develop having wise advisors in your life?
2. In 2 Kings 5:17-18 made a radical change in his life, but he also was practical in how those changes were implemented. Do you ever over-promise and underperform? If so, how can you keep that from happening in the future?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Kings 2:23-25 is the story of Elisha calling down a curse on 42 boys which were then mauled by some bears. Why did Elisha do that? Do you ever disrespect people of God by what you say or do?
2. Read the story of 2 Kings 5:1-6. Describe the life of the slave girl prior to her being taken captive, and her life immediately after. What kind of risk was she taking when she advised her master to go see Elisha? What would have happened if her master had not been healed? Do you think her master gave her a great reward?
3. 2 Kings 10:28-31 describes Jehu getting close to being completely obedient to God, and reaping great rewards. But he did not complete his job. Have you ever lost rewards because you did not completely obey your parents or someone else in authority?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 13

Narrator: Jonah and Gomer

Primary Scriptures: *Jonah, 2 Kings 17, Amos, Hosea*

Story Summary: Jonah and Ninevah; end of the Northern Kingdom

Location: Ninevah, Northern Kingdom

Time: 780-722 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Jonah 3:5, 10; 4:9. 2 Kings 17:7-8, 18, 41. Amos 4:13. Hosea 11:1

As shown in previous episodes, the Northern Kingdom did not turn away from its idolatry and disobedience to God. In 722 BC, God finally had enough. He allowed the Assyrians to completely destroy the Northern Kingdom and scatter its survivors among the other nations it dominated. That final end of the Northern Kingdom resulted in its ten tribes losing their identity and becoming known as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

The demise of the Northern Kingdom could have been averted if its kings and people had listened to the prophets God sent them. The last of those prophets were Jonah, Amos and Hosea. They prophesied during the times of the last five kings of the Northern Kingdom, from Joash to Hoshea. Except for a brief respite under King Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom suffered economically and politically during these times.

Jonah was a unique Jewish prophet, because God sent him to preach to the Assyrians, not the Jews. Although he took a three-day detour in the belly of a big fish, Jonah eventually reached Ninevah, the capital of Assyria and the biggest, most powerful city in the known world. When Jonah preached his simple message, the people of Assyria responded so well that God chose not to destroy them.

It's easy to read the story of Jonah and miss a big picture. If Jonah had remained a faithful preacher to the Assyrians, they might not have chosen to destroy the Northern Kingdom several decades later!

Amos was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom even though he was a shepherd and fig farmer from Tekoa, a small village less than ten miles south of Bethlehem. Amos wrote during the brief time of prosperity of Jeroboam II's kingship. His major themes were social justice, judgment, and God's omnipotence.

Hosea was the last well-known prophet to the Northern Kingdom. Through Hosea, God tried a last-ditch effort to reclaim the Northern Kingdom. God had Hosea marry an unfaithful prostitute, Gomer, in an effort to show Israel their unfaithfulness. Hosea's sad story is a reflection of God's final relationship with the Northern Kingdom.

Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Kings 17:6 summarizes the end of the Northern Kingdom because of its defeat by the Assyrians. What happened to the population of the Northern Kingdom?
2. According to 2 Kings 17:7-8, why did God put an end to the Northern Kingdom?
3. According to 2 Kings 17:24-41, what happened to the lands included in the Northern Kingdom?
4. Why did God require Hosea to both marry a prostitute and have children by her?
5. What is the significance of Amos being from Tekoa? What was one of his main themes?

1. The Assyrians took the people into exile and settled them in various locations. It was the custom of the Assyrians to do this to lessen the chances of rebellion. By widely dispersing them, the Israelites could not keep their identity as a separate people. 2. Because they worshiped false gods and followed the practices of other countries. 3. The Assyrians resettled people groups from other countries into the lands of the Northern Kingdom. These people worshiped their foreign gods along with some worship of God. This corrupt form of worship continued until at least the time of the writing of 2 Kings 17 according to verse 34. 4. To symbolize the unfaithfulness of the Israelites toward God, and to demonstrate the forgiving nature of God. 5. He was from the Southern Kingdom, but preached to the Northern Kingdom. His main themes were social justice, God's omnipotence, and divine justice.

Application Questions:

1. God was patient with the Northern Kingdom for about two centuries before he allowed it to be destroyed. How is God's patience demonstrated in your life? In the history of your country?
2. Jonah tried to run away from God by getting on a boat. How do you tend to run away from God when you don't want to do what He calls you to do? Do you do it physically or mentally? What sorts of "big fishes" has God sent to bring you back to Him?
3. If God wanted you to symbolize the nature of the sins of your community, what might he have you do?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Jonah initially refused to go to the Assyrians because he wanted them to be destroyed instead of being forgiven if they repented. How do you feel about those you perceive as your enemies? Do you tend to want them to be punished?
2. When God forgave the Assyrians, Jonah greatly resented it. How are Christians supposed to feel toward their enemies?
3. Amos lived in the Southern Kingdom, but God had him go to the Northern Kingdom to warn them of their impending destruction if they did not quit sinning. What group might God want you to be a good example to by how you live or by what you say?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 14

Narrator: Jehoiada and King Joash

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 11-12, 2 Chronicles 13-24

Story Summary: The kingdom of Joash

Location: The Southern Kingdom

Time: 900-800 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 15:2, 17; 16:9; 24:2, 20

This episode steps back to the Southern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah, after the death of its first king, Rehoboam. All of the kings of the Southern Kingdom were descendants of King David.

Abijah was the king after Rehoboam, and was Rehoboam's son. He waged war against the Northern Kingdom and regained a little territory from them. He was king for three years.

Asa was the king after Abijah, and was Abijah's son. Asa was one of the good kings who eliminated many of the idols and places of worship built in the time of Solomon. Unfortunately, in the last year of his reign, the Northern Kingdom threatened to overtake the Southern Kingdom. Asa sent all of the gold and silver in the Temple to the kingdom of Aram seeking their support, but since Asa relied on Aram instead of God, he was punished.

Jehoshaphat was the king after Asa, and was Asa's son. He began well, and God rewarded him as king. However, as his kingdom prospered, he chose to align himself with the Northern Kingdom in battle. Even so, he was a good king who destroyed idols and idol worship.

Jehoram (or Joram) was the king after Jehoshaphat, and was the husband of Athaliah. Her parents were the evil Ahab and Jezebel, king and queen of the Northern Kingdom. He reigned eight years, and drove the kingdom right back into idol worship. The vassal kingdoms of Judah rebelled against him, and the Lord afflicted him with a painful, deadly disease. He ruled eight years.

Ahaziah was the son of Jehoram and Athaliah. He ruled only one year before God decreed that he should die, along with the other descendants of Ahab.

When Ahaziah died, the throne was seized by his mother, Athaliah, the only queen to occupy the throne of the Southern Kingdom. She tried to kill all of the descendants of Jehoram that could have been a threat to her, but she did not know one of them escaped. She was very wicked.

Joash was the son of Jehoram, but his mother was not Athaliah. He was hidden by the priest Jehoiada in the Temple, and was raised in secret there. Jehoiada later led a revolt against the evil Athaliah and had her killed. Joash came to the throne at age seven, and turned out to be a king faithful to God...at least while Jehoiada was alive!

Discussion Questions:

1. According to 2 Chronicles 13:1, Abijah became king of the Southern Kingdom while Jeroboam was still king of the Northern Kingdom. How did that affect Abijah's goals?

2. According to 2 Chronicles 13, the Southern Kingdom under Abijah relied on the Lord, and on the promise that David's house would rule forever. How did God reward that faithfulness?
3. Explain the message of 2 Chronicles 16:7-9 and how it might relate to your life or the actions of your church in today's times?
4. Discuss 2 Chronicles 16:12 and how it might guide you in your prayers about when people are ill.
5. Discuss the story of 2 Chronicles 18 and how it might guide you in choosing your friends and sources of wisdom. Does that fit with 2 Chronicles 19:2?
6. 2 Chronicles 20:1-29 is one of the most powerful stories in the Old Testament. Do you think God would still act in that powerful way again if his people followed him closely and relied on him? According to 20:22, when did God begin to act?
7. What does the story of King Joash tell about the importance of the ways we raise our children?

1. It drove Abijah to war against the Northern Kingdom to regain territory, regain honor, and to lead the people of the Northern Kingdom back to God. 2. God gave him victory over the Northern Kingdom and Jeroboam, and gave him a successful reign.

Application Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 15:1-7 says that Azariah told King Asa that he should reform the country from worshipping idols, and that God would reward him if he did so. If someone was to come tell you a similar message, what parts of your life would need reforming? Would you be willing to listen to and heed that message? According to 2 Chronicles 16:10, was King Asa willing to listen when the message was not so positive?
2. What does 2 Chronicles 15:17 tell you about the conflict that sets up when you want to worship God but continue to follow certain ways of the world?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Chronicles 15:8 says that King Asa listened to good advice and took it. Do you tend to seek out advice or avoid listening to it? How has that worked out for you? Whose advice do you trust? Why? Are there others you should be asking for advice? Why or why not?
2. According to 2 Chronicles 17:3-6, why was the Lord with Jehoshaphat? According to 17:10, how did his actions affect the surrounding countries? Do you ever think how your being a Christian might affect those around you?
3. What might 2 Chronicles 19:2 mean in your life?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 15

Narrator: King Hezekiah, Isaiah

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 25-32, *Isaiah, Micah*

Story Summary: The lives of King Hezekiah and Isaiah

Location: Southern Kingdom (Judah)

Time: 730-686 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 25:2; 2 Kings 20:19

After King Joash, the Southern Kingdom was ruled by his son Amaziah; by Amaziah's son, Uzziah; by Uzziah's son, Jotham; by Jotham's son, Ahaz; and, by Ahaz's son, Hezekiah.

One of the saddest scriptures in the Bible is about Amaziah. "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly."¹ Eventually, he abandoned the Lord completely.

Uzziah started off well, like his father had done. Also like his father, he eventually let his pride lead to his downfall. God punished him by making him a leper.

Jotham was a king who acted faithfully before God. However, he did not stop the people from worshiping false gods.

Ahaz was an evil king who worshiped false gods and led the people to worship them, too.. God punished him by letting his enemies defeat him in battle.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king and immediately began cleansing the Southern Kingdom of its idols and places of worship to false gods. He reestablished worship of God at the Temple.

Despite Hezekiah's faithful actions, the king of Assyria invaded the Southern Kingdom and threatened to destroy Jerusalem and all those in it. Based on the Isaiah's advice, Hezekiah remained faithful and God ended the threat.

Hezekiah became ill to the point of death. Isaiah prayed for him, and God agreed to give Hezekiah fifteen more years of life. Hezekiah was joyous, but he did not know that this was a very mixed blessing.

During those fifteen years, Hezekiah became prideful and showed off his treasures to Babylonian envoys. Eventually this led to an invasion by the Babylonians who carried off the treasure. Also, during those fifteen years, Hezekiah had a son, Manasseh. This son was to be the most evil king of all, and was the cause of the eventual destruction of the Southern Kingdom.

As a note of interest, 2 Kings 20:20 speaks of a pool and tunnel that Hezekiah built. That tunnel still exists and can be visited by tourists. It is called Hezekiah's Tunnel.

Discussion Questions:

¹ 2 Chronicles 25:2

1. 2 Chronicles 26:8 says that the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. Why was that mentioned?
 2. 2 Chronicles 28:19 says that the Lord punished the country for the actions of its leader. Does God still do that same thing today?
 3. Hezekiah's father promoted idolatry. Where did Hezekiah get his desire to follow the Lord?
 4. 2 Chronicles 31:1 tells of the Israelites destroying the idols of the country. Where did they get the impetus to do that? Could your country's leaders inspire your people to do similar types of acts?
 5. 2 Kings 20:6 says God gave Hezekiah 15 more years of life because he prayed to live longer. What two horrible events happened because God answered the prayer?
1. Under David, the surrounding countries were forced to pay tribute to him. Since the split of the kingdom, many of those countries had quit paying tribute. 5. He fathered his son, Manasseh, who turned out to be a horribly evil king; he showed off his treasures to Babylon which incentivized them to capture the country in later years.

Application Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 25:2 says Amaziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly. What do you think that means? Have you behaved that way? What would "wholeheartedly" look like in your life?
2. 2 Chronicles 26:5 says that the Lord gave Uzziah success as long as he sought the Lord. Does God behave that way today in your life? What does Jesus say about this matter? What does "success" mean to you? Why do you choose to define it this way?
3. 2 Chronicles 32:8 tells that Hezekiah relied on God when he was threatened by an enemy. Where did he get the confidence to do that? According to verse 20, who did Hezekiah have pray with him?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Chronicles 25:8 says the Lord has the power to help or to overthrow. Is it okay to pray for God to overthrow people you perceive as your enemies? Why or why not?
2. Read 2 Chronicles 25:12. Why did God allow his people to do such a thing?
3. 2 Chronicles 26:16 reminds us of Proverb 16:18, "Pride comes before the fall." Explain what that saying means. Have you seen this happen in someone's life?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 16

Narrator: King Josiah, Jeremiah

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 21-23, 2 Chronicles 33-36, *Zephaniah*

Story Summary: Events leading to the end of the Southern Kingdom

Location: Judah

Time: 700-610 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Kings 21:12; 22:2, 19; 23:25-26

Hezekiah was followed by his son, Manasseh. Manasseh was followed by his son, Amon. Amon was followed by his son, Josiah.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, the late-in-life son of a proud, old man. Manasseh led the Southern Kingdom for fifty-five years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Manasseh rebuilt the places to worship false gods, listened to fortune tellers and sorcerers, and even burned his own children as sacrifices to false gods in the Valley of Hinnom. He also stooped to worship false gods in the Temple.

He was so bad that God had the king of Assyria capture him, bind him with hooks and chains, and take him to Babylon. Although he eventually repented and made some changes, he caused immense spiritual damage to the Southern Kingdom, and would be the final straw that broke its back.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned only two years. He was as evil as his father, but did not repent. His servants conspired against him and killed him.

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. From the start, he worshiped God completely. When he was twenty-six, he led the refurbishing of the Temple. While that work was going on, the priests found the Book of the Law, which appears to have been unknown.

When Josiah heard the words of the Law, he was distressed. He knew the nation had been worshiping false gods and ignoring the true God. The prophetess Hulda prophesied that God was going to destroy the Southern Kingdom because of their long-term false disobedience, but that he would not do it during the life of Josiah.

Josiah started with a vengeance to eliminate the worship of false gods. He tore down all of the places of worship, including those that had been erected hundreds of years before by Solomon. He did everything humanly possible to atone for the sins of his ancestors. Nevertheless, it was not enough. God was finished with his disobedient people.

Josiah's story ends with some of the saddest words in the Bible: The Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger which burned against the Southern Kingdom because all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger.

Discussion Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:2 sums up the life of Manasseh. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the detestable practices of the pagan nations. What does all that mean?
2. Do the accounts of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings seem to give the same message? Might the writers have had different goals in writing what they did?
3. King Josiah was maybe the best of all the kings. Read the account in 2 Chronicles 34 and describe all of the good things he did.
4. 2 Chronicles 34:28 relates a piece of theology that is very uncomfortable for many people. Even though Josiah did every thing possible to follow God and lead the people in his worship, the prophet said it was not enough, that was too late. Josiah could not overcome the evil actions of his predecessors. Does this type of thinking conflict with the New Testament or is it in agreement with it?

1. Manasseh led the kingdom into every kind of worship of false gods that he could think of, and desecrated the Temple of God. These actions are described in 1 Chronicles 33:3-7.

Application Questions:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:6 says that Manasseh did so much evil that it aroused the anger of the Lord. When you are considering following the idols of this world, does it cross your mind that you could be arousing the anger of the Lord?
2. Although Manasseh repented and fixed much of the damage he caused, he could not completely overcome the consequences of his actions, because the people never quit following the practices he instituted. Can you think of some consequences of your actions that continue through time even though you have repented of them?
3. 2 Chronicles 33:22 says that Amon followed in the ways of his father. Have you seen your children follow in your ways, both good and bad? What happened?
4. According to 2 Chronicles 34:27, God was responsive to Josiah because he his heart was responsive and he humbled himself before God. What would such a posture look like in your own life? Are you willing to humble yourself before God no matter what it takes?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. 2 Chronicles 33:10 said that the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. One of the ways that the Lord speaks to his people today is through the Bible. When you don't study the Bible regularly, would you consider that not paying attention to the Lord? What are other ways you can focus your attention on him?
2. Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. He followed God, and did not behave like his father or grandfather. How do you think he learned to do that? Do most of your friends tend to behave like their parents? Do you? Why or why not?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 17

Narrator: Isaiah, Jeremiah

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 24-25, *Jeremiah, Lamentations, Habakkuk*

Story Summary: Events leading to the end of the Southern Kingdom

Location: Judah

Time: 610-586 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Kings 24:20; Jeremiah 1:5; Habakkuk 2:4; 3:17-18

The last four kings of the Southern Kingdom were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. All four kings were evil in the sight of the Lord because of their idol worship. All four had devastating problems with the Egyptian, Assyrian, or Babylonian empires.

The last king, Zedekiah, rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. After a horrible famine caused by a siege, Zedekiah tried to escape. He was captured and taken to the Babylonian king. As punishment, Zedekiah's sons were killed in front of him. That was the last sight he saw. They blinded him, bound him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon.

The Babylonians burned every building and house in Jerusalem, including the Temple, and broke down the city walls. They took all the treasures and important people into exile in Babylon, and left poor people behind to keep the land productive. This was the final end to the Southern Kingdom.

A little less than five centuries from King Saul to King Zedekiah. The people wanted a king just like the countries around them, and they got kings just like the countries around them: kings who disobeyed God, and led the people into further disobedience. God was patient, but he finally had enough.

Throughout the time of the kings, God sent many prophets to warn and to guide both the kings and the people. Almost every time, the prophets were ignored. The people did not want to hear the truth, and they did not want to change their ways.

What are some of the things that modern people can learn from the writings of the prophets? Certainly, we can learn about many characteristics of God, such as his desire to be loved and obeyed, his righteousness, and his mercy and judgments.

We can learn how to be obedient to God even when the society around you is corrupt and evil. We can learn to listen to wise people who follow God.

Another important thing we can learn from the prophets is that many of them prophesied about the coming Messiah, Jesus. A review of the Gospels and Paul's writings show that they often proved to their audiences that Jesus is the Savior by using the prophecies in the Old Testament.

Yes, the books of the prophets are often long and complex, but they are profitable to read for people of all generations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss different types of prophecies.
2. Did the prophets know that they were sometimes prophesying about Jesus?
3. 2 Kings 24:1-4 discusses the beginning of the end for the Southern Kingdom. Why did God choose to end the existence of the Southern Kingdom in the way he did?
4. What is the significance of 2 Kings 24:7?
5. According to 2 Kings 24:10-17, how complete was the first victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Southern Kingdom? What was left?
6. 2 Kings 25:8-11 describes the complete destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Why did God allow the Babylonians to destroy the city so completely?
7. 2 Kings 25:12 describes the fact that the Babylonians did not deport the poor people. Do you think that was part of God's provision for the exiles when they were to return many decades later?

1. Some prophecies are meant to speak truth about an important matter. Other prophecies are meant to foretell the future. Some do both. 2. No, they did not. 3. Manasseh was the last straw for the Lord. The people of Judah had continually fallen into idol worship, and had abandoned the Lord. He used the surrounding peoples to do the job as a sign that that his people had abandoned him, so he had abandoned them to the destruction of very weak enemies. 4. Israel was in the sights of competing empires, and the Babylonians were stronger than the Egyptians at this point in time. 6. The people had abandoned God so completely that he no longer valued the city or the Temple that had been built to him. In fact, he probably wanted them destroyed so nobody would think that he was associated with the Jews any longer.

Application Questions:

1. According to 2 Kings 24:8, did the people of the Southern Kingdom try to turn back to God when it was almost their very last chance? Do you ever refuse to turn to God, even when you know you should? What does it take for you to do so?
2. According to 2 Kings 24:20, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. He was obviously a very weak king. What could have possessed him to do something so foolish? Have you ever miscalculated the outcomes of your choices?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to 2 Kings 24:20, why did all the unpleasant things happen to the Southern Kingdom? What does it mean when God thrusts someone from his presence? Does God do that to people today?
2. 2 Kings 25:8-12 describes the complete abandonment of the Southern Kingdom by God. Do you think Christians can behave in such a way that God would choose to abandon them? Why or why not?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 18

Narrator: King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel

Primary Scriptures: *Daniel, Ezekiel, Obadiah*

Story Summary: Daniel and the exile of the Jews

Location: Babylon, Persia

Time: 605-586 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Daniel 3:17-18; 9:23; Ezekiel 2:7; 3:19--21

The book of *Daniel* is a little challenging for modern readers because the sections are not always in chronological order, and the names are confusing. Many modern readers believe some of the stories in *Daniel* are meant to be applied to the time of Jesus' return.

Daniel was taken into exile from the Southern Kingdom to Babylon in 605 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar of the Assyrians. This was before the final exile of the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC. He was still living in exile when the Medes and Persians overthrew the Assyrians. He is treated as a prophet by Christians, but not by the Jews.

The book of *Daniel* begins by describing Daniel and his friends being taken into exile, then being chosen to serve in the king's court. Immediately, Daniel and his friends begin to distinguish themselves by following Hebrew dietary laws, and by being very intelligent. Daniel not only is wise, but is also able to interpret dreams.

Daniel is filled with some of the best-known stories in the Bible: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the blazing furnace; Daniel's interpretations of various dreams; the writing on the wall; Daniel in the lions' den; and Daniel's many visions and dreams. Through all these times, both good and bad, Daniel remained faithful to God.

Daniel 12 is specifically about the time of the end of the world as we know it. What this chapter, and many other chapters in *Daniel* mean, greatly influences the many ways people interpret the Second Coming of Jesus and the times leading up to it.

Daniel 9 is one of the most meaningful chapters in the book, but it is often slighted. In it, Daniel finds an important passage in the writings of Jeremiah. This shows he was a student of the Law and Prophets. He realized that Jeremiah had prophesied that the Jews would be in exile for seventy years, then would start returning to Jerusalem.

What did he do? He started praying. He repented on behalf of his people and he praised God. From the moment he started praying, God started answering his prayer and started honoring him. That is a lesson that we should always be praising God while praying for God's people, and for forgiveness.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Daniel end up in Babylon?
2. How did Daniel come to be in the service of the government?

3. Why were Daniel and his friends so gifted?
4. Why did God save Daniel from the lions in the den?
5. In the book of Daniel, there are stories of many dreams and visions. Do you perceive that those things have already happened, or that they will happen at the End Times?

1. The Babylonians took many Jews into exile when they were victorious over King Jehoiakim of Judah. It appears Daniel was one of those. 2. The Babylonians ruled a vast empire. They chose to take the best of their conquered victims and put them to service in the government. This gave them excellent civil servants and reduced the chances of rebellion by enemy leaders. 3. God gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds. 4. Because he was innocent. Daniel 6:21-22.

Application Questions:

1. In Daniel 2:27-28, Daniel gave God credit instead of taking it for himself. How could you implement this in your business and personal life?
2. In Daniel 2:49, it is revealed that Daniel helped promote his friends to places of power. Have you cultivated friends that you would be willing to promote in business or social settings? How do you choose your friends?
3. Read Daniel 4:28-33. Would you be likely to be arrogant if you knew God was going to immediately punish you for doing so? How can you train yourself to be more humble?
4. According to Daniel 9:2, Daniel had a special insight because he took the time to study Scripture. How did he act on that insight? Is prayer your first response to problems? Is repentance a part of your typical prayer?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. In Daniel 2:49 you see that Daniel helped promote his friends. He had earlier gone through tough times with them and had had them pray for him. How do you think you can develop friendships that are meaningful? Can you be more intentional about doing so? Should all your friendships be meaningful, or is it okay to have some that aren't? Why or why not?
2. Read Daniel 3:17-18. How does somebody ever get that much faith in God, and continue having faith whether God acts the way they want or not? Is that a level of faith you feel you can have? How might you develop it?
3. Daniel reacted to bad news by continuing to follow his habit of praying, as shown in Daniel 6:10. How can you cultivate a habit of praying regularly? Will this be hard or easy to do?
4. What lessons can you learn from Daniel 10:12?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 19

Narrator: Zechariah, Esther

Primary Scriptures: *Zechariah, Haggai, Esther*

Story Summary: The Jews in exile in Babylon and Persia

Location: Babylon, Persia

Time: 586-475 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Esther 4:12-14, 16; 8:17; Haggai 1:4, 7; Zechariah 1:6; 4:10

The Jews from the Southern Kingdom were taken into exile into Babylon in 586 BC. The Babylonians were conquered by King Cyrus of the Persians in 538 or 539 BC. Shortly after that, he sent either one or two smallish delegations of Jews back to Jerusalem under the leadership of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. Those stories are found in the book of *Ezra* and *Haggai*.

The purpose of those returns was to rebuild the Temple and reinstitute worship there. The Jews were not as diligent as they should have been. Also, the people who had been living in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas greatly opposed what the Jews were doing, and got the Persians to temporarily stop them.

Zechariah and Haggai wrote to warn the Jews of God's impending punishment for their behavior, including their laziness and their intermarriage with non-Jews.

Meanwhile, back in Persia, the remainder of Jews were becoming accustomed to exile, and many were prospering financially. One of them, Esther, became queen to King Xerxes, an opportunity that became available when his former queen, Vashti, did not respect him sufficiently.

Esther's uncle, Mordecai, had once saved the king's life. He kept his relationship to Esther a secret, and made sure nobody knew she was a Jew. A new advisor to the king, Haman, hated Mordecai because he would not bow down to Haman. That set the stage for a wonderful story of deliverance.

Haman hated Mordecai so badly that he tricked the king into signing an irrevocable law to greatly harm the Jews, and made arrangements to personally kill Mordecai. His plans went off track when Mordecai informed Queen Esther, and encouraged her to take countermeasures.

Esther's responses were so wise that she not only saved Mordecai and the Jews, but also turned the situation to the advantage of the Jews. Esther's actions are remembered by the Jews in the annual festival of Purim.

A little tidbit: Haman was an Agagite, very possibly related to King Agag, the king that Saul was supposed to have killed but didn't. Since he didn't, God took away Saul's dynasty. The story of Esther may not have occurred if King Saul had obeyed God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did Queen Esther know Daniel?
2. Why did Queen Vashti get punished so harshly?

3. Why did Mordecai have Esther conceal her background?
4. How did Esther try to get protection when asked to put herself in danger by going to the king?
5. How have Jews celebrated Esther's actions throughout the centuries?

1. Queen Esther probably lived several decades after Daniel died. 2. According to Esther 1:15-18, the officials did not want her to set a bad example for the other women of the empire. 3. The Jews may have attained a bad reputation among many of the Persians because of their desire to be separate from the rest of society. 4. She asked all the Jews to fast in support of her. 5. By having the feast of Purim.

Application Questions:

1. According to Esther 1:8, Esther may have been taken to the palace whether she wanted to go or not. The following verses indicate that she made the best of her situation. Have you learned to make the best of your situation when you really had no choice to be in it, or do you react negatively?
2. Esther 4:12-14 is a famous passage. Name a time when God obviously put you in a situation for you to do something. Did you do it? How do you know when God is placing you to do something?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Esther 4:12-14 is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. Do you think God still puts people in places for specific reasons? Do you think God has placed you in your situation for a reason? If so, what do you think will happen after you've fulfilled that purpose?
2. Esther did not act irrationally when asked to put herself in danger. What did she do according to Esther 4:16? Have you ever asked your friends or relatives to pray and fast for you when you have to make an important decision? Would you do it if someone asked you to do so?

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 20

Narrator: Ezra, Malachi

Primary Scriptures: *Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi*

Story Summary: Return of the Jews from exile to Jerusalem and Judah

Location: Judah

Time: 538-43 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Ezra 3:3, 3:12; 8:21-23; 9:6; Nehemiah 4:9; 5:19; Malachi 1:8, 2:7, 2:15-16; 3:1, 3:10, 3:18; 4:5

The Jews of the Southern Kingdom were taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The first contingent of Jews returned in 538-539 BC, soon after King Cyrus of the Persians conquered Babylon. The second contingent returned in 458 BC under Ezra, and the third contingent returned in 445 BC under Nehemiah.

Ezra's goal was to improve the situation of the Jews who had previously returned. He had approval of the Persian government, and brought donations and holy vessels to the Temple. The Persian government supported the trip by giving Ezra supplies.

Ezra realized the situation in Israel had deteriorated over the previous decades. Political harassment from local leaders, intermarriage with other ethnic groups, and heavy taxes were burdens for the Jews. Their culture was under siege.

The efforts of Ezra to help his people were so successful that the local politicians appealed to the Persians to stop his efforts. The Persians managed to stop the work on the city walls for a period of time.

About thirteen years after Ezra's departure, Nehemiah concluded that he should lead more Jews back. As a beloved cupbearer of the King, Nehemiah not only got permission to go, but was given great favor.

A strong administrator, Nehemiah divided the construction work into 42 groups of families, each responsible for their own district. The builders not only had to build, but had to protect themselves and the rest of the people.

A wise man, Nehemiah solved a near uprising of the people who were working on the walls. While they worked, the rich Jews supplied their needs, but charged high prices and interest. Nehemiah got them to reduce their prices and forgive much of the debt. By coming to a peaceful solution, he set the stage for the successful completion of the wall and the firm establishment of a Jewish society.

Malachi prophesied during the time of Nehemiah, and chastised the people for not behaving as God wanted them to. The words of Malachi would ring in the ears of the Jewish people for over four decades, when his words would be supplemented and replaced by a young Jewish rabbi named Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Cyrus allow the Jews to start returning to Judah?
2. What were the first things the Jews built when they returned from exile?
3. How many returns of the Jewish exiles are recorded in the Bible?
4. What were the reactions of the Jews when they saw the foundations of the rebuilt Temple?
5. According to Ezra 7:1 and 7:10, who was Ezra?
6. What was the purpose of the return led by Ezra?
7. What was the purpose of the return led by Nehemiah? How did he prepare to lead the return?

1. The Lord moved him to do so in order to fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezra 1:1. 2. The altar to make sacrifices, then the temple. 3. Three 4. Ezra 3:12-13 seems to indicate that some of them were thrilled and some were disappointed. 5. A very well-qualified teacher of the Law of Moses. 6. To help rebuild the Temple and to honor God. 7. To rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He prepared by mourning, fasting, and praying.

Application Questions:

1. According to Ezra 1:5, the leading Jews who returned from exile were those whose hearts God moved. In modern times, how do you know if God has moved your heart to do something? Does having the support of your friends and neighbors indicate that God is involved?
2. Ezra 4:24 describes the halting of the Temple rebuild. How do you react when you receive bad news or encounter setbacks? Are you willing to follow authority even when it opposes what you believe to be right? Why or why not?
3. Nehemiah and his people were greatly threatened when they wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. How did they react according to Nehemiah 4:9? What does it look like in your life to react both spiritually and physically? Does that mean you might not trust God enough to just react spiritually?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to Ezra 5:1-2, Zerubbabel defied the orders of the king because the prophet Haggai told him to. How do you know when you should follow earthly authority?
2. In Ezra 8:21-22, Ezra is described as being ashamed to ask the king for protection, so he asked his people to humble themselves by fasting. Have you ever fasted in order to humble yourself before God? According to Ezra 8:23, how did God respond?
3. Read Nehemiah 5:19. Is it okay to ask God to reward you when you are obedient to him? What if he doesn't reward you in the way you ask?