

READ: Deuteronomy 17: 14-20, 1 Samuel 8: 1-10



KEY VERSE:

1 Samuel 8: 7

“And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.’”

Our Studies of the kings of Judah and Israel will, in particular, concentrate upon the period during which the nation was divided into northern and southern kingdoms. It is well to remember that in the beginning, it was not God’s plan for the nation to have a king. Ever since the children of Israel left Egypt and emerged as a nation in their own right, this kingdom had belonged to God. (**Exodus 19: 6**) They were to be ruled by God Himself and not man - a theocracy, not a democracy!

Remarkably, even before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were given detailed instructions by God, as to the kind of king who would rule over them. This reveals that God knew that, in time, His people would turn from following Him and desire to copy the surrounding nations by having a king.

We note in the first Bible Reading three important facts:

1. GOD’S DECISION -

God would be the One to choose the king. (**Verses 14 & 15**) This in turn gave the king’s position high honour. His appointment was solely for the purpose of ruling over God’s people in a way acceptable to God. The words of God to King David were, **“He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God”.** (**2 Samuel 23: 3 & 4**)

2. GOD’S DIRECTIONS -

Those chosen to be king had to submit to God. Note in **verses 16 and 17** three things they were told not to do. They were not to trust in their own military might, nor be distracted from being focused on the Lord, by having many wives. There was also the real danger that a foreign wife would cause the king to worship idols. (**See 1 Kings 11: 1-4**) Thirdly, they were not to seek financial gain through their position. Such things would only cause the nation’s figurehead to pursue a godless way of life, which would result in the nation turning away from God’s truth.

3. GOD’S DESIRE -

In **verses 18-20** we see how the kings were reminded of their responsibility when on the throne - first and foremost their service was for God! The Lord placed great emphasis upon His Word. Note how they were to copy it, read it, keep it and practise it! Knowing God’s law would give them a better understanding of God and His ways and thus enable them to rule in a manner pleasing to Him. **Verse 20** gives us three main reasons for placing such importance on the law:-

- i) The king was not to become proud. The godly example of King Hezekiah reveals how such pride could be checked. (**2 Chronicles 32: 25 & 26**)
- ii) God’s law would act as a clear guide through life. For example, the law was prominent during Josiah’s reign and so we read - **“he . . . did not turn aside to the right hand, or to the left.”** (**2 Chronicles 34: 2**)
- iii) Each faithful king was promised that his reign would be extended, along with that of his children. This would remind them of their responsibility to pursue a godly reign and to set a good example. Sadly, for one king, Jehoshaphat, his links with the wicked King Ahab created difficulties for himself and later for his children too. (**2 Chronicles 18: 1, 31 and 21: 1-6**) [We shall study these kings in greater detail later!]

Having looked at God’s instructions for future kings, we now need to answer the question - ‘Why did the Israelites seek a king?’ Basically, it was because of a two-fold problem, as we see in the key passage of **1 Samuel 8: 3-6**. They were discontented with the judges, namely Samuel’s sons, and they were attracted by the idea of being like the surrounding countries! From the Lord’s viewpoint such a change was totally unnecessary. As Samuel warned them (**verses 7-18**), the simple form of God’s rule was being replaced with something more complex and demanding! How tragic that the people had rejected God as their Sovereign!

If we have acknowledged Jesus Christ as our Lord and trusted in Him, then we too must be willing to let Him have full rule in our lives. We must obey His Word and seek always to live our lives in a way that fully pleases Him. It should ever be our desire and goal to do His will and to follow the perfect example of the Lord we love and serve.

Study 1. God's King

1 WRITE A SENTENCE TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS MEANT BY A THEOCRACY.

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2 ACCORDING TO *DEUTERONOMY 17: 15*, WHAT CONDITIONS DID GOD STIPULATE ABOUT THE CHOICE OF A KING?

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3 LINKING GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING WEALTH IN *DEUTERONOMY 17: 17* WITH PAUL'S TEACHING IN *1 TIMOTHY 6: 6-10*, WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE BE TOWARDS MATERIAL WEALTH?

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4 CONCERNING GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING HIS LAW:

a. What would be the advantages for the king of copying it out for himself?

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b. Why is the daily reading of it imposed upon the king?

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c. Give an example of how God's Word has helped you to grow in your Christian life.

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5 *2 CHRONICLES 34: 27* TELLS HOW YOUNG KING JOSIAH RESPONDED WHEN HE HEARD WHAT GOD'S WORD SAID. WRITE IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT HIS RESPONSE WAS.

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6 GOD SAID, "*THEY HAVE REJECTED ME, THAT I SHOULD NOT REIGN OVER THEM*". (KEY VERSE)

a. To whom did He say this?

b. What were the people demanding of Samuel at this time?

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c. Give two reasons for their demands.

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7 *REVELATION 19: 16* REFERS TO THE LORD JESUS IN HIS FUTURE GLORY. WRITE IT OUT AND UNDERLINE THE TITLE WHICH IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THIS STUDY!

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Total marks
for this study

Study 2. Solomon - The wisest King

READ: 1 Kings 3: 3-28



KEY VERSE:

1 Kings 3: 3

“Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David.”

The first king of the newly established monarchy in Israel was Saul, who reigned from 1050 - 1010 BC. Saul's successor and God's choice of a king who would rule Israel properly, was David, the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem. Like Saul, he reigned for 40 years, 1010 - 970 BC. Although Saul was head and shoulders above David physically, he was a spiritual midget compared to him. David had his faults and weaknesses - and Scripture does not overlook these - but essentially he was, in God's own words, **“a man after My own heart who will do all My will”**. (Acts 13: 22) His reign brought glory to God and blessing to his subjects.

David left a secure kingdom to his son Solomon, whom he had named as his successor shortly before his death. Like his father, Solomon also reigned for 40 years, 970 - 930 BC. We learn from **2 Samuel 12: 24** that **“the Lord loved him”**. How wonderful! How true of us all! We see from the **Key Verse** that **“Solomon loved the Lord”**. The question we must ask ourselves is - Do we? He showed his love for God by walking in His ways. David's last advice to his son had been, **“Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways”**. (1 Kings 2: 2 & 3) **“To walk”** here, as so often in the Bible, refers to the way he lived. Solomon obeyed the commandments that David had received from God. Solomon began by putting God first in his life - Have we?

At the very start of his reign, God gave him a choice. It was one night after he had been worshipping and offering sacrifices. God appeared to him in a dream and made him a tremendous offer. He said, **“Ask!, What shall I give you?”** (1 Kings 3: 5) What should he ask for? Over and over again, his father, David, had had dangerous enemies to contend with, like the Philistines and Syrians. Should he ask God for victory over these nations? Kings in surrounding countries had storehouses filled with treasures of every sort. If he was to be recognised as a great

potentate, surely he must have the same! Perhaps these and many other possibilities went through his mind before he gave his answer. What would you have asked for?

Before asking for anything at all, Solomon acknowledged God's unchanging kindness to his father David. (v. 6) Solomon was a grown man, but felt like a little child in the face of the responsibility he now had. (v. 7) He would have to guide and look after God's people. He would have to make decisions in all sorts of difficult situations. He wanted to do what was best for the nation; he wanted to rule them justly and well. So instead of asking God for something which would benefit mainly himself, he asked for wisdom and ability to **“discern between good and evil”**. (v. 9) God was testing his character and heart. His choice was noble, worthy and unselfish. Solomon's reply really pleased God, and his request was granted. In addition, he was promised blessing he had not asked for. (vs. 11-13) We do well to remember the words of the Saviour when He said, **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”**. (Matthew 6: 33)

The second half of the Bible Reading gives an instance of Solomon's wisdom from God, in action. Read **verses 16-28** again. The two women had come with conflicting stories. There were no witnesses, and the child whom they both claimed, was too young to recognise his mother. Solomon set up a trap. When he suggested cutting the child in two, he soon found out who was the true mother! She was the one who was prepared to lose the child rather than see him die! This incident impressed everyone with Solomon's great wisdom. They realised God was helping him. (v. 28) We greatly need Divine wisdom in our everyday lives. Solomon's three books, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon, which are part of the Bible, were written to teach us about wise ways of living. Many have found great help in reading a chapter of Proverbs each day.

Study 2. Solomon - The wisest King

1 THE REIGNS OF SAUL, DAVID AND SOLOMON HAD ONE NOTICEABLE SIMILARITY. WHAT WAS IT?

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2 IN MANY WAYS DAVID HAD SET SOLOMON A GOOD EXAMPLE. WRITE OUT WHAT SOLOMON SAID ABOUT HIS FATHER'S CHARACTER. (CLUE! 1 KINGS 3: 6)

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3 WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT TO DESCRIBE HOW SOLOMON REFERRED TO HIMSELF AND HIS SUBJECTS AS HE TALKED WITH GOD IN VERSES 7-9.

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4 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT SOLOMON'S CHARACTER FROM THE ANSWERS HE GAVE TO GOD'S QUESTION IN VERSE 5?

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5 READ SOLOMON'S WORDS IN PROVERBS 3: 5 & 6 AND EXPLAIN SIMPLY WHAT THEY MEAN.

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6 WRITE TRUE OR FALSE AFTER EACH STATEMENT AND FILL IN THE NUMBER OF THE VERSE THAT GIVES THE ANSWER.

- a. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by obeying His commands. Verse.....
- b. God promised Solomon a long life, if he continued to obey Him. Verse.....
- c. The real mother would let her child die. Verse.....
- d. Solomon's subjects realised that his wisdom came from God. Verse.....

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7 READ MATTHEW 6: 33 AND EXPLAIN HOW SOLOMON'S EXPERIENCE ILLUSTRATES THIS TEACHING OF CHRIST.

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Study 3. Solomon - His sad decline

READ: 1 Kings 10: 23-29, 11: 1-13



KEY VERSE:

1 Kings 11: 6

“Solomon... did not fully follow the Lord.”

THE TEMPLE BUILDER:

What a fine start Solomon made! The wealth and wisdom gifted to him by God were put to good use. His reign was one of peace and prosperity, during which Israel's borders reached their greatest extent. He continued well, too, and God gave him the privilege of building His Temple. As Solomon himself realised, God cannot be confined inside a building, but it was a symbol of His presence among His people. (**1 Kings 8: 27**) It was twice the size of the portable Tabernacle on which it was modelled. (**See 1 Kings 6 & 7**)

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed to God. His wonderful prayer is recorded in **1 Kings 8: 23-53**. As he speaks to God we learn how much he understood about the Lord, His character and His purposes. It is challenging to ask ourselves at this point - How much do I understand and appreciate about the Lord God whom I love and worship?

THE WISE COUNSELLOR:

The news of Solomon's immense wealth and his special wisdom travelled far and wide. Among the many people who travelled a distance to benefit from his wisdom was the Queen of Sheba. (**1 Kings 10: 1-13**) Like most visitors, she returned home overwhelmed by what she had seen and heard in Solomon's court. He was honoured far beyond the boundaries of Israel. His kingdom was strong as well as rich, for he had also built up a powerful army.

THE FOOLISH IDOLATER:

How good God was to him! Surely Solomon would love Him more and more as the years went by. So he did at first, but sad to say, as he grew older things went wrong! His greatest achievement may have been building the Temple but his most devastating mistake was to marry foreign princesses. Such marriages were a disaster, for those heathen wives brought their pagan religions with them. This opened the door for the introduction of idolatry again into Israel.

God had warned His people about the danger of marrying those who did not love and worship Him. (**Exodus 34: 12-16**) Solomon, while continuing to worship God, eventually followed his wives' example,

joining them in their worship of idols. In effect he was saying, 'God isn't all that important; He's just one of many gods. He can have part of my life, part of my loyalty, but not all!' What do we allow into our lives, to rob God of His rightful first-place in our hearts?

How tragic! At one time Solomon had said, **“The Lord is God; there is no other...”** and had prayed that all the peoples of the earth should know this. (**1 Kings 8: 60**) Now he had forgotten this great truth and had broken the first of the Ten Commandments. (**Exodus 20: 3**) This was not all! He did not just worship privately with his wives, he built shrines for their idols - **“abominations”** as the Jews called them. (**1 Kings 11: 7**) Thus the second Commandment was also broken! At the beginning of his reign, Solomon had wanted to do the best for his people, yet by the end of his life his example was anything but helpful to them!

What was the result of his sin? Solomon had made it his aim to build up a strong kingdom, but in turning away from the Lord he was turning away from the real source of stability and strength. For the sake of David his father, God allowed the kingdom to stand during Solomon's lifetime. After that, it was split into two much weakened kingdoms. (**1 Kings 11: 11-13**)

What can we learn from Solomon's decline?

1. We see the tremendous influence we can have on one another. In contrast to the good influence which he had had on the Queen of Sheba, (**1 Kings 10: 9**) the influence of Solomon's heathen wives brought disaster!
2. Failure to use the enlightenment that God has given to us results in disaster. (**Read 1 Kings 3: 12 & 4: 29**) A warning about such failure comes in the New Testament in **James 4: 17**.
3. Sin can and does harm others. Solomon's behaviour had consequences for his son. (**1 Kings 11: 11 & 12**)
4. The need to remain steadfast in our Christian faith, and avoid unfaithfulness to the Lord. Solomon's life is a solemn reminder that people might spend their early lives in devoted service to God, and yet end their days far away from Him! It is good to begin well in spiritual things; it is better still to continue well, but the best of all is to end well!

Study 3. Solomon - His sad decline

1 DETAILS CONCERNING THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE ARE FOUND IN *1 KINGS 5 & 6*.

- a. What was the main wood used in the Temple interior?
- b. With what was the whole Temple overlaid?
- c. According to *1 KINGS 5: 13, 15 & 16* how many people in total were involved in the Temple construction?

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2 FROM SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION (*1 KINGS 8: 22-53*) OUTLINE AT LEAST THREE THINGS WE CAN LEARN ABOUT THE LORD GOD AND GIVE VERSE REFERENCES TO BACK UP YOUR STATEMENTS.

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3 DRAW STRAIGHT LINES TO CONNECT THESE STATEMENTS WITH THE CORRECT VERSES:

- i. God kept His promise to give Solomon riches and wisdom. *1 KINGS 10: 26*
- ii. Solomon had a powerful army. *1 KINGS 8: 41-43*
- iii. Solomon wished that people in other countries should know and worship God. *1 KINGS 11: 4*
- iv. Solomon's wives turned his heart after other gods. *1 KINGS 10: 23*

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4 WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH SUMMARISING IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT THE QUEEN OF SHEBA SAID TO SOLOMON IN *1 KINGS 10: 6-9*.

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5 NOTE THE WORDS OF *2 CORINTHIANS 6: 14*, "DO NOT BE UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS." AND *1 CORINTHIANS 7: 39*, "... SHE IS AT LIBERTY TO BE MARRIED TO WHOM SHE WISHES, ONLY IN THE LORD." FROM THESE SCRIPTURES WE LEARN THAT A CHRISTIAN SHOULD MARRY ONLY ANOTHER CHRISTIAN, AND NOT AN UNBELIEVER. KEEPING SOLOMON'S EXPERIENCE IN MIND, GIVE YOUR REASONS FOR THINKING WHY THIS IS GOD'S WILL.

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6 WHY WAS SOLOMON'S KINGDOM SPLIT INTO TWO PARTS AFTER HIS DEATH?

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7 FROM WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM SOLOMON'S DECLINE, WHAT STEPS WOULD YOU TAKE TO MAKE SURE YOU CONTINUE STEADFASTLY TO THE END?

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Study 4. The Divided Kingdom

This study sheet belongs to:

READ: 1 Kings 12: 1-33



KEY VERSE:

1 Kings 11: 35

“But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand and give it to you - ten tribes.”

A prophet, called Ahijah, spoke the words of the **Key Verse**, to Solomon’s servant, Jeroboam. Earlier, God had told Solomon that the kingdom would be divided. As a result of Jeroboam’s rebellion Solomon sought to kill him, but he fled to Egypt until his master’s death. **(1 Kings 11:26 & 40)** Solomon’s son, Rehoboam was crowned king in his place. However, Jeroboam returned and led a delegation to ask the new king to ease the burden of royal service placed upon the nation, in return for the loyalty of his subjects. After consulting first the older men who had counselled his father, and then his contemporaries, he decided to accept the advice of the younger men. **(See 12: 13 & 14)** As a result of his harsh stance and his failure to listen to the people, most of Israel rejected him as their king! Instead, ten tribes chose Jeroboam to be their new monarch and so Israel was now divided. Rehoboam initially planned to fight against this rebellion but God clearly instructed him not to, saying, **“This thing is from Me”(v. 24)** So a civil war was averted and two separate kingdoms were established. They can be summarised as follows:

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

Referred to as Israel, it consisted of ten tribes with its capital city Samaria. Nineteen kings, of evil character, reigned from 931-722 BC (209 years). Their first king, Jeroboam I, was a wicked man, who completely overthrew God’s laws regarding worship and priesthood. He set up idols at Bethel and Dan, worshipped demons contrary to God’s command, **(2 Chronicles 11: 15)** and **“made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi”.** **(1 Kings 12: 31)** This set the pattern for subsequent monarchs, all of whom indulged in idolatry to some extent. There was a short period of revival during the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, but sadly, it was only a brief pause in the rapid decline of Israel! Things went from bad to worse until eventually, in the reign of King Hoshea, **“the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria”.** **(2 Kings 17: 6)** The northern kingdom was never re-established.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

The tribes of Judah and Benjamin alone remained

KINGS & PROPHETS - NORTHERN KINGDOM					
KING	(BC)	PROPHET	KING	(BC)	PROPHET
1. Jeroboam I	931		12. Jehoash	798	Amos
2. Nadab	910		13. Jeroboam II	782	Amos
3. Baasha	909		14. Zechariah	753	Amos
4. Elah	886		15. Shallum	752	Amos
5. Zimri	885		16. Menahem	752	Hosea
6. Omri	885		17. Pekahiah	742	Hosea
7. Ahab	874	Elijah	18. Pekah	740	Hosea
8. Ahaziah	853	Elijah	19. Hoshea	732	Hosea
9. Joram	852	Elijah	The Northern kingdom (Israel) was defeated and taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 BC		
10. Jehu	841	Elisha			
11. Jehoahaz	814	Elisha			

faithful to the house of David and together formed the southern kingdom, usually called Judah. This kingdom, with its capital city at Jerusalem, was ruled over by a succession of nineteen kings and one queen, of mixed character, from 931-586 BC (345 years). Unlike the north, down in the south there was a degree of faithfulness to God. Some kings did introduce idolatry but other kings rigorously sought to exclude paganism from their kingdom. The first two kings of Judah were bad men, but Asa was a good king, as were seven other kings of Judah, including Asa’s son, Jehoshaphat. (Some of these will be considered later in this series of Studies.) Eventually, however, Judah went the way of Israel. The rule of David’s dynasty in Jerusalem came to an end when Judah was invaded by King Nebuchadnezzar and taken away into captivity in Babylon. At this time, the people were corrupted, the Temple was defiled, the messengers of God were mocked and His words despised. What a sad state of affairs! Is it any wonder the Lord intervened and allowed the invasion to take place? **(See 2 Chronicles 36: 15-21)**

KINGS & PROPHETS - SOUTHERN KINGDOM					
KING	(BC)	PROPHET	KING	(BC)	PROPHET
1. Rehoboam	931		11. Jotham	740	Micah
2. Abijah	913		12. Ahaz	732	Micah, Isaiah
3. Asa	911		13. Hezekiah	716	Micah
4. Jehoshaphat	870		14. Manasseh	687	Isaiah, Nahum
5. Jehoram	848	Obadiah	15. Amon	642	
6. Ahaziah	841		16. Josiah	640	Jeremiah, Zephaniah
7. Queen Athaliah	841		17. Jehoahaz	609	Jeremiah
8. Joash	835	Joel	18. Jehoikim	609	Jeremiah, Habbakkuk
9. Amaziah	796		19. Jehoiachin	597	Jeremiah
10. Uzziah	767		20. Zedekiah	597	Jeremiah

The Southern Kingdom (Judah) was taken captive by Babylon in 586 BC. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed at this time.

(Note: All dates in these Studies are approximate)

Study 4. The Divided Kingdom

1 ACCORDING TO *1 KINGS 12: 15 & 24*, WHO WAS BEHIND THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

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2 ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:-

- a. The kingdom was divided because of Solomon's sin.
- b. Jeroboam was a good man.
- c. Ten tribes made up the southern kingdom.
- d. Rehoboam followed the advice of the young men.
- e. Benjamin and Judah remained faithful to the house of David.

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3 THE GENERAL PROBLEM IN THE LIFE OF REHOBOAM CAN BE FOUND IN *2 CHRONICLES 12: 14*.

- a. Write out this verse.

- b. According to *VERSE 1* of the same chapter, what did he do instead?

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4 OUTLINE FOUR THINGS THAT JEROBOAM INTRODUCED INTO ISRAEL THAT WERE ALL CONTRARY TO GOD'S COMMANDS.

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5 LOOK AT THE LISTS OF KINGS AND PROPHETS AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

- i. Who was the prophet during Ahab's reign?
- ii. Who was the king in Zephaniah's day?
- iii. Who was Judah's king when they were taken into captivity?
- iv. Over which kingdom did Queen Athaliah rule?

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6 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR A YOUNG CHRISTIAN TO LISTEN TO THE ADVICE OF OLDER BELIEVERS? WHAT ADVANTAGES WOULD THEY HAVE OVER A YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S CONTEMPORARIES?

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7 THINKING UPON THE ACTIONS OF SOLOMON, REHOBOAM AND JEROBOAM, GIVE A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE MAIN LESSONS WHICH HAVE CHALLENGED YOU MOST AS A CHRISTIAN.

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100
 Total marks
 for this Unit

Return your study sheets to:

25
 Total marks
 for this study