

Solomon as Judge — I Kings 1-3, II Chronicles 1, John 5:30



Antoon Claissens, The Judgement of Solomon

Solomon as judge foreshadows Christ as judge. The story begins with one son, Adonijah, attempting to take the throne without his father's consent, simply knowing his father was old and feeble, and enlisting Joab and others in the coup. When told of the plot, David took the necessary measures to place Solomon on the throne. When David advised Solomon in his new role as king, he told him to execute judgment on David's enemies, which Solomon did.

Solomon pleased God by asking for wisdom rather than long life or riches or death for his enemies, and humbly identifying himself as a little child. God promised to make him extraordinarily wise and understanding. Solomon's role as a discerning judge is best-known from his decision made for two prostitutes quarreling over a living child. Through saying they should divide the child in half, he discovered which was the true mother. The public was impressed with his wisdom.

Christ's wisdom is perfect, and his ability to judge fairly can be trusted. At the Day of Justice (perhaps a better translation for us than Day of Judgment), we are told that everything will be set to right, all the ills of the world will be sorted out correctly and we will know he has made the right decisions.

Do I trust Christ's wisdom coming on a perfect day of justice?

Good Politics — I Kings 4, Matthew 21:5



Rembrandt van Rijn, Solomon Proclaimed King, Riding on the Mule

Solomon's peaceful kingdom foreshadows Christ's peaceful kingdom. When first crowned, he rode on King David's personal mule and all the people played flutes and shouted for joy, foreshadowing Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

During his reign the people were numerous, contented, had great food, and lived in peace. The economy was good with each family having a home and a garden. Taxes to support the king were not seen as too onerous, the administration was well-organized and the king was wise, not only in administering justice, but in pursuing the arts and sciences of the day. He was a writer, poet, a botanist, a zoologist, and an excellent diplomat.

Security, prosperity, good administration, wisdom—all things we hope for in our political systems and sometimes achieve, even briefly. All of this foreshadows the perfect administration to come. God demonstrates with Solomon the principle repeated often in scripture that humility leads to exaltation.

Had Solomon not subsequently fallen into sin, he would be a striking image of Christ, creating a peaceable kingdom without war, building a beautiful temple, and being wise. Unfortunately, because of his sin, these good accomplishments are overshadowed. This time of his successful rule is a beautiful example of what we want in our political world today.

Am I faithful to pray for those in government that we might live quiet and peaceful lives?

The Temple — I Kings 5-7, John 2:19-22



Raphael Sanzio, The Construction of the Temple of Solomon

The temple foreshadowed Christ's presence in the world. The tabernacle represented the presence of God with his pilgrim people and Solomon's temple represented God's presence with his settled people. Each one was based on an ordinary dwelling, but was made more beautiful and elaborate. The functions of cooking, eating, resting and privacy were made part of God's house.

The dedication of the temple took place in the fall, during a lengthened two-week Festival of Shelters. This feast looked forward to the incarnation, and carried the same emotions as Christmas does for us, a time of great joy.

This beautiful building took seven years to build and the talents of the best craftsmen and architects. The gold-covered square Holy of Holies pointed ahead to the golden city of God. The cedar and cypress woodwork, and the carvings of gourds, palm trees and open flowers pointed backwards and forwards to paradisaal gardens.

In our time we have an accumulation of beautiful churches and cathedrals that have utilized the most cutting-edge architecture and art of their time. In our time an astonishing basilica is pushing architectural limits, using mathematical computer aerospace modeling, robots, and new materials. Designed by Gaudi in Barcelona, Spain, it has been under construction for over 130 years. Every detail inspired from scripture and nature makes it a work of art. The nave is like a giant forest with tree-like branches holding up the roof. The entire set of eighteen towers, sculptures of nativity and passion, trees, and stars are an iconography of worship.

Whatl beautiful spaces for worship bring me joy?

The Veil — II Chronicles 2-6, Hebrews 10:19-20



Donna Rose Levin, The Tearing of the Temple Veil

Hebrews compares the veil, or curtain, protecting and separating the Most Holy place, to Christ's flesh. At the moment of his death the veil was ripped from top to bottom, and as Hebrews explains, we were thereby invited into the presence of God.

In the passage in Kings on the temple, the doors are mentioned, but here we are told about the beautiful curtain with cherubim in blue, purple and scarlet. Furnishings and layout followed the outline of the tabernacle. Two immense golden

statues of cherubim with seven and a half foot wings stretched thirty feet across the Most Holy Place. The floor of the temple was paved with gold, reminding us of the city with golden streets described in Revelation. The Most Holy Place was in the form of a cube, and foreshadowed the cube-like dimensions of the New Jerusalem.

Innovations included two named pillars in front of the temple and storage rooms around the outside, making it a place of community where priest led the people in worship. The veil was crossed only once a year for the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. On the day of the crucifixion when had been foreshadowed for centuries by that day of fasting, Christ tore down that veil and we now can enter into God's presence at any time.

Do I enter Christ's presence in prayer in confidence?

Temple Dedication — I Kings 8, 9:1-9, II Chronicles 7, John 2:19



Marc Chagall, Prayer of Solomon

When dedicated, the temple building was imbued with God's presence. Christ took the imagery and applied it to himself as the combination of human and divine in one place. The temple is mentioned 162 times in II Chronicles, far more than any other book. Jerusalem, the temple site, occurs 121 times in the book, demonstrating a focus on this particular image of Christ.

Solomon asked that God would hear humble and earnest requests when the people prayed in the direction of the temple. His dedicatory prayer reminds us of Christ's prayer:

<i>Solomon</i>	<i>Christ</i>
Listen from your home in heaven	Our Father who art in heaven
Blessed be God	May your name be holy
All people on earth will know God	Your will be done on earth as in heaven
Forgive us our sins	Forgive us our debts
Deliver us from enemies	Deliver us from evil

As the Temple was inaugurated, God's glorious presence filled the place, looking back to the pillars of cloud and fire in the desert and looking forward to Christ. His glory was particularly revealed at the Transfiguration, the Ascension, and is promised for his return. Light and glory.

Is my heart's desire that God's name be honored in all things?

Solomon's glory — I Kings 9-10, II Chronicles 8-9, Matthew 6:28-30



Marc Chagall, Solomon on his throne

Solomon's glory reflects the glory of Christ the king. Just as for his father David, II Chronicles only gives us the positive aspects of Solomon's life. These chapters present Solomon as the model king: wise, glorious, and admired. The Queen of Sheba came from far away and expressed amazement at his power and glory. His unique throne of ivory had twelve lions on six steps and was like no other earthly throne.

Jesus referred to the glory of Solomon twice, once in reference to beautiful clothing, the second time to compare his own glory as greater than that of Solomon. Christ said that the Queen of Sheba would condemn those in the last judgment who rejected him, since she had the wisdom to seek Solomon, a lesser person, in her day.

In addition to his wisdom, Solomon surrounded himself with beautiful things: a palace that left the queen breathless, food, spices, splendid clothing for his officials, robes for his cupbearers, gold jewels, cedar wood, gold dinner service, plentiful silver, peacocks, and fine musical instruments made of beautiful wood. There were 1400 chariots, and 12,000 of the best horses that money could buy. Solomon's carriage had wood from Lebanon, posts of silver, a gold canopy, and a seat of purple cloth.

Palaces today remind us of not only Solomon's splendor, but the greater splendor of the greater king to come. Solomon's throne foreshadows God's throne, and we, as royal children, have complete access to that place of power and love.

Do I worship Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Solomon's Failure — I Kings 11, I Corinthians 1:8-9



Willem de Poorter, The Idolatry of King Solomon

Solomon's failure did not negate God's promise to send Christ through David and his descendants. God removed Solomon from the throne for his idolatry and compromise, but he kept external and internal enemies from harassing him. God warned him he would take all but one tribe from his son's rule.

I and II Kings demonstrate that God fulfills his promises and prophecies, and that he punishes idolatry. The framing promise is that of the eternal kingdom given to David that will lead to Christ. Therefore, even idolatry and failure in the kings of Judah does not result in their removal, whereas the succession in Israel is chaotic. The chaos in Israel serves as a foil, highlighting God's faithfulness to Judah despite their failures.

In Israel the kings were uniformly disobedient. In Judah there were periodic purifications and revivals under Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. In each revival scripture was recovered, the temple was cleansed, and prophetic voices could be heard.

Ultimately Judah was disciplined through the Babylonian captivity, but succession from David was never broken. The fundamental lesson of I and II Kings is God's faithfulness in the face of the people's unfaithfulness, something we can certainly apply to ourselves.

Do I trust that God's promises are completely trustworthy?

Rehoboam — I Kings 12, II Chronicles 10-12, Acts 2:30



Hans Holbien the Younger, Rehoboam's Arrogance

God fulfilled his promise to David by preserving Solomon's son Rehoboam as king of Judah, so that Christ could come as his descendant. Rehoboam's idolatry was so horrendous, he deserved to be removed from the throne immediately: pagan shrines, sacred pillars, Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree, and shrine prostitutes.

Because of the promise to David, however, Rehoboam remained. Jeroboam's revolt against him was successful in part because of his foolish decision to be harsh and demanding with the people. When he decided to go to war he heeded a prophetic warning not to do so, showing some vestige of respect for the faith of his fathers.

Kings has thirty-six prophecies and their fulfillment. It also fulfills Leviticus' prophetic warnings of the consequences of disobedience. I and II Kings contain a *chiasm* where fulfillments follow in reverse order to the prophecies.

Prophecy

David's throne eternal despite Solomon	I Kings 11
Only one tribe will remain	I Kings 11
Jeroboam's false religion will be destroyed	I Kings 13
Israel will be abandoned	I Kings 14

Fulfillment

Israel is destroyed by Assyria
Josiah destroys the false religion
Judah and her kings remain
Christ, the eternal king, arrives

II Kings 17
II Kings 24
II Kings 25
Matthew

Despite Rehoboam's disobedience, the promise of an eternal kingdom given to David and fulfilled in Christ remained firm. We also can grasp this unwavering trustworthiness of God despite our failures.

Is prophetic fulfillment in scripture a sign to me--both of warning and of hope?

Jeroboam — I Kings 13-14, Luke 1:51-52



Jean Honore Fragonard, Jeroboam brings a sacrifice to idols

Jeroboam was a transitory ruler who used religion to reinforce his political position. In contrast, Christ as an everlasting king of an everlasting kingdom. Jeroboam was the first king of Israel in a divided kingdom that was doomed to vanish. Because of Solomon's disobedience, Ahijah the prophet had told Jeroboam, who worked for

Solomon, that God would make him king of ten tribes. Jeroboam fled to Egypt when Solomon heard of the prophecy and tried to kill him. After Solomon's death, Jeroboam returned and became a spokesman for the people to Rehoboam. When these efforts failed, he revolted.

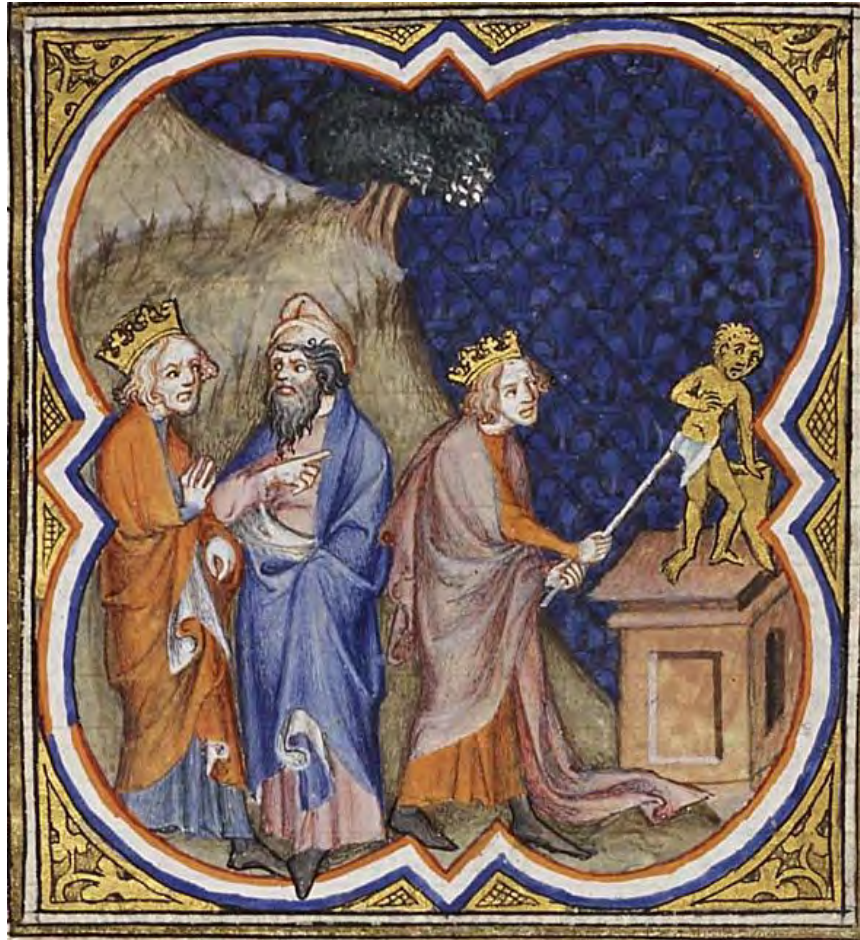
Jeroboam created a false religion for political ends, worried that people would return to Rehoboam if they made pilgrimages to Jerusalem. He made two golden calves, said they had brought the people from Egypt hundreds of years before, recruited priests from any tribe, and established a fall harvest festival that mimicked the Festival of Shelters.

A prophet warned that Israel would be shaken, uprooted and scattered for their idolatry. He said false religious priests and their altars would be desecrated by a future Judean king who would burn human bones on the altar, something done by King Josiah after Israel had been removed from the land. The split of the Kingdom into Israel and Judah occurred around 930 BC and lasted until 722 BC when Israel was taken into captivity and disappeared into Assyrian culture. In contrast, Judah was not taken into captivity until 586 BC and was restored to the land.

Jeroboam experienced two miracles to which he could have responded: ashes fell out of a split altar, and his hand became paralyzed and was then healed. But these signs of mercy did not touch his hard heart.

Am I discerning of when religion is being distorted for political purposes?

Abijah and Asa — II Chronicles 13-16, Matthew 6:13



Bible Historiale, Asa destroying the idol

Christ protects us as we depend on him. In the early years of the divided kingdom, the Judean kings still depended on God for protection. Abijah held on to faith in God when Israel tried to conquer, and God delivered Judah. His son Asa experienced similar protection. But their faith was imperfect. In I Kings 15 we are told that Abijah's heart was not right before God. Nevertheless, he depended on the covenant promise with David and had confidence it would not be broken.

For 36 years Asa reigned in peace and influenced the people to seek God with all their heart and soul. He had long periods of peace, and victory when enemies came against him. His prayer encourages us today: "O Lord, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty!" He led the people in making a covenant with God to seek him with all their heart and soul.

For the last five years of his life, Asa became more worldly-wise. First he trusted his ally Syria more than God, then imprisoned the prophet who reproached him, and finally began to oppress some people. A serious foot disease became life-threatening over a two year period, ending in death. Sadly, having been so full of faith before, at this point he did not seek God's help, only that of the physicians.

Asa's story gives us an interesting point of view regarding doctors. In the Law people were encouraged to take their ailments to the priests, who were able to address both physical and spiritual issues. Asa erroneously chose only physical help, which in our time of great medical knowledge is a temptation for us as well.

In any illness, is my first instinct and recourse to turn to God in prayer?

If you do not listen — I Kings 15-16, Mark 4:9



"Triumph of Death" portraying the Great Plague of Roman Catholic Europe during the Middle Ages
By Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1526/1530–1569)

Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Triumph of Death

Christ called his followers to keep their spiritual ears open, just as God through Moses had made the same call. For those who would not listen, Christ warned that even those listening would not understand. In the Law God warned that if they did not listen there would be consequences.

One would think this would be enough to cause the people to question the idolatrous path they were on, but they simply continued this perilous course. In Leviticus 26 Moses gave six terrible consequences if the covenant was broken: political instability/disease/sudden terrors, drought, wild animals killing children, famine, cannibalism, exile.

While David's descendants Abijah and Asa continued his line on Judah's throne, the monarchy in Israel was increasingly chaotic. These chapters contain political instability and many sudden terrors, which was one of the first warning signs from Leviticus: the king's family was killed, another king was assassinated, family and

even distant relatives of another king were killed, a king committed suicide by burning himself inside a house, two sons died when a city was rebuilt, there was constant war, another king had a wasting disease, and there was civil war.

With all the warnings, however, there was still a promise of mercy and grace. If the people would repent, they would return from exile. God said he would not harm them if they quit worshipping idols. As Israel and then Judah moved through these consequences, there was repeated intervention, and miraculous and positive actions on God's part, offered as encouragement for repentance.

Our call is to be part of those who are turning around and calling others to turn around and go once more in the direction of a life obedient to God. No matter the cultural and political environment we are in, we can remain strong and loyal to God's ways.

Do I pray with humble repentance for political instability in our world?

Elijah — I Kings 17-19, Matthew 17:10-13



Marc Chagall, Offering of Elijah

The New Testament compared Elijah and John the Baptist. In his discourse on John the Baptist Christ pointed out Malachi's prophecy of the return of Elijah and applied it to John who prepared the way for Messiah to come. Christ also used Elijah's example to demonstrate God's love for all nations, mentioning how he went

to a Gentile, a widow in Sidon, during famine. Christ responded to a Gentile woman's pleas for help in that very same place.

Elijah appeared on the scene to announce drought, the second sign of judgment prophesied in Leviticus. Up to this point in the book of Kings, the political leaders dominated the stories with the prophets in a secondary role. Now Elijah took the stage as an equal to evil King Ahab, in direct competition for the hearts of the people. After him, the prophets became leading characters. When Elijah announced the end of the drought it was yet another moment of mercy, allowing more time for people to respond to the call to repentance.

In competition with Baal's prophets at Mount Carmel, Elijah proved that God was real and powerful and Baal was imaginary. In Elijah's discouragement after the victory at Mount Carmel, he began to replicate much in the life of Moses. He was alone in the desert and had a direct encounter with God's messenger, much as Moses at the burning bush. He was miraculously provided with food, reminiscent of the manna in the desert. He then spent forty days and nights wandering the 200 miles to the traditional site of Mount Sinai. Elijah's encounter with God there represented a return to the roots of faith when the law was received.

Elijah's story looks back to Moses and forward to Christ. When the widow's son died, Elijah's successful prayer resulted in a return from the dead, just as Christ raised a widow's son. The layers of spirituality are clear here: Moses, Elijah, Christ, John the Baptist, and us today. We are to walk in the footsteps of all these spiritual giants.

Do I take desert and retreat times as an opportunity for deeper encounters with God?

Ahab and Jezebel — I Kings 20-21, John 3:20-21



Frederic Leighton, Jezebel and Ahab

Ahab and Jezebel foreshadow Christ's enemies, and Naboth, their victim, is an image of Christ. Jezebel, an archetypal evil woman, comes to a much-deserved gruesome end, thrown out a window like a fairy-tale witch. Her bad character negatively influenced her husband and children, encouraging idolatry and disbelief in God. She supported her husband's childishness and sulkiness, determined to get him whatever he wanted, no matter the cost, including murder.

The couple most parallel to Ahab and Jezebel in Christ's life were Herod and Herodias. Just as Ahab opposed Elijah, Herod opposed John the Baptist. Just as Herodias asked for John the Baptist's head on a plate, Jezebel put Elijah on notice that she planned to kill him. In the life of Christ, opposition and cruelty came from political and spiritual leaders who, like Jezebel and Ahab, did not want their leadership challenged. Naboth and Christ both had false accusers who said they blasphemed God and deserved death.

Prophets gave Ahab messages that could have brought him to repentance: no rain, rain would come, he would defeat Aram, he would be attacked within a year, he would die for allowing the king to survive, dogs would lick his blood, his wife and descendants would be killed, and he would temporarily be spared because of his

repentance. At the end, he was warned he would die in battle. Each of these things came true because of his refusal to repent, and he is a tragic figure.

Am I alert and quick to respond to warnings to repent?

Jehoshaphat—I Kings 22, II Chronicles 17-20, Mark 1:21-22



Jean Fouquet, Triumph of Jehoshaphat over Adad of Assyria

Jehoshaphat prefigured Christ as a wise ruler, teacher, and defender of his people. Jehoshaphat was a good king who removed pagan shrines as did all the good kings. In addition, like Christ, he sent out excellent men on a teaching mission throughout Judah, using scripture as their text to draw people to God. Later the king visited his whole nation, exhorting them to return to God.

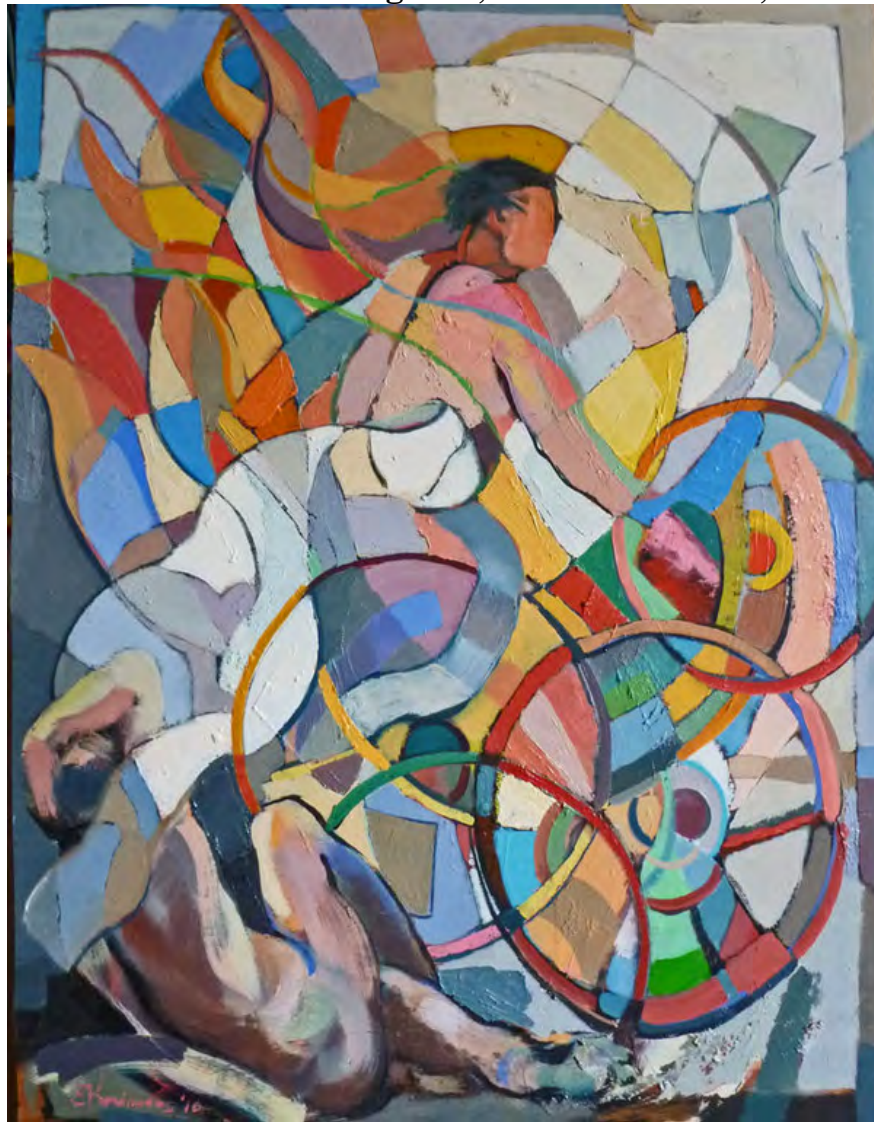
He set up three levels of the judiciary and charged the judges to make decisions based on respect for God and his law. When threatened by an enemy, Jehoshaphat called the nation to fasting and prayer and God gave an unusual victory with a choir going into battle ahead of the army.

Jehoshaphat's failures came from collaborating with wicked Israelite kings. But he accepted correction humbly, as for example, a shipwreck in a shared business venture, and repented of these moments of poor judgment. His godly life models Christ better than most of Judah's kings.

Jehoshaphat faced an overwhelming army which was routed by God without human effort. In victory the people engaged in worship, praise, shouting, singing, giving thanks. Their acknowledgement of blessing, their joy, and their harp, lyre and trumpet music are a great example.

Do I understand and use the power of music for spiritual ends?

Elijah's Ascension — II Kings 1-2, II Chronicles 21, Acts 1:9-11



Edward Knippers, Elijah and the Chariot of Fire

Elijah was like Christ in challenging an evil king and being pursued and in danger of his life. Like Christ, he called a disciple, Elisha, to follow him and continue his ministry. His disappearance into heaven in a fiery chariot foreshadowed Christ's

ascension. Elijah was powerful in the Spirit, doing many miraculous signs just as Christ's life was full of the miraculous.

Elijah appeared in the gospels at the transfiguration along with Moses, both towering figures who prepared the way for Christ's ministry. When Samaritans rejected Christ on his way to Jerusalem, and the disciples proposed sending fire from heaven on them, some manuscripts add "like Elijah" since he had done this. Jesus said no.

Christ promised us power when we receive the Spirit, a gift now available to all believers rather than selected leaders only. In the last 120 years there have been so many miraculous signs of Elijah-like power it inspires and challenges us. Every believer is offered the opportunity to be a spiritual powerhouse like Elijah simply by asking to be filled.

Do I daily depend on the filling of the Spirit?

Elisha — II Kings 3-5, Luke 4:27



Tintoretto, Elisha multiplies the bread

Elisha foreshadows Christ as prophet, healer, teacher, miracle-worker, and trainer of a group of followers. He reached beyond the ethnic boundaries of Israel, and healed a Syrian, an example Christ used to speak of God's universal love. Elisha's life is full of good stories taken on their own terms. Repeatedly God offered undeserved mercy and miraculous interventions through Elisha.

Elisha's relationship to Elijah resembles that of Joshua to Moses. Both served as assistants, both were nearby when the leaders were taken to heaven, both divided the waters of Jordan to cross it. He also resembles Moses: purifying water, providing water, rescuing from poisoned meat, and healing a leper. But there are even more parallels to Christ that are unique to Elisha.

We have a disturbing story of wild bears who attacked 42 mocking young men. This recalls the Levitical warning that if people persisted in their stubborn disobedience, then attack by wild animals would be the third curse. What follows, however, are miracles that directly look forward to Christ. These intrude before the fourth curse (famine) and fifth curse (cannibalism) occur.

II Kings	<i>Elisha's actions</i>	<i>Reminders of Christ</i>
3	Prophesied victory to a believing king	Prophesied his victory over evil to his disciples
4:1-7	Multiplied oil	Turned water to wine
4:8-37	Raised a child from the dead	Raised the widow's child
4:38-44	Multiplied bread	Multiplied bread twice
5:1-19	Healed a leper	Healed many lepers
6:1-7	Floating ax head	Walking on water



Joos de Momper II, The Cleansing of Naaman

All of Elisha's miracles anticipate Christ, and he identified healing as one of the roles of a prophet. When he healed Naaman of leprosy, he was anticipating the many times Christ healed lepers.

Do I believe God is ready to intervene miraculously in any difficulty today?

The Angelic Hosts — II Kings 6-7, Luke 2:13-14



Raphael, Michael

At Christ's birth, the angel army came announcing peace on earth. Angel army occurs four times in the Hebrew scriptures, but here they are called horses and chariots of fire. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures angels played many roles: messengers, protectors, rescuers, singers, and worshippers. They fought alongside Israel, or took care of the battle on their own. In Daniel, Jude and Revelation, Michael is named as a leader of fighting angels and has become a popular figure in art.

Elisha had the capacity to see the angel armies and their fiery chariots surrounding the human army that had come after him. Here they not only protected Israel, they brought peace. Elisha prayed for the army to be blinded, led them to the king, and insisted they be released as prisoners of war.

Then comes the tragic story of famine and resulting cannibalism, once again part of the series of curses from Leviticus 26. More stories of mercy follow. The angel army created enough noise for the attackers to be alarmed and leave. Outcast lepers were the means of bringing the good news that the famine was over.

The Psalmist gave us a sense of the angelic world, referring to twenty thousand chariots of God with thousands of angels. Daniel wrote of millions of angels serving God. In Revelation John wrote of thousands and millions of angels. Christ chose not to call the angels of heaven to his rescue, but knew that he could call on thousands of angels for protection. These are mysterious, but inspiring, spiritual figures that we have been told we may encounter, especially in any acts of kindness to a stranger.

Do I live with an awareness that there is a mighty hidden world all around us?

Mercy and Judgment — II Kings 8, John 3:18



Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Elisha and the Shunammite woman

Christ brought a message of mercy for those willing to believe, and judgment for those unwilling. Elisha brought a similar message. After the judgment of the famine which was reversed, people could respond with belief. One who did was the woman whose son was raised from the dead. She returned to the land, trusting that the seven years of famine Elisha prophesied were over. As her testimony of resurrection was being recounted to the king by Elisha's servant Gehazi, she arrived. She received back her land and the value of her crops, receiving justice.

While the sixth Levitical curse of being taken from the land would happen, there was still time for repentance. There would be more disbelieving kings and some believing ones. Elisha gave messages of political judgments on unbelieving kings, thereby fulfilling work commissioned to Elijah

Elijah was told to anoint leaders:

Hazael to be king of Aram	I Kings 19:15
Jehu to be king of Israel	I Kings 19:16
Elisha selected and anointed	I Kings 19:16, 19

Elisha carried out these anointings:

Elisha anointed Hazael	II Kings 8:13, 15
Elisha sent younger prophet to anoint Jehu	II Kings 9: 3,6

Elisha gave yet one more prophesy to Jehu's grandson when on his deathbed. Always, he stood out as God's witness to the unbelieving kings of his time.

Do I trust that even God's judgments are intended for our good, and that he longs to show us mercy?

Jehu — II Kings 9-10, II Chronicles 22, Matthew 16:27



Flemish Tapestry, Jehu and Jezebel

Jehu exercised judgment reminiscent of final judgment. However, his cruelty contrasts with Christ who will judge with perfect justice. Jehu's story is one of prophecy and fulfillment. He was the instrument of judgment on Ahab's family, but in turn was warned that his family would only last four generations.

Prophecy and fulfillment explain much about Israel's kings.

Jeroboam's descendants will all die	I Kings 13:10
Baasha kills all of Jeroboam's family	I Kings 15:29
Baasha's family will be destroyed	I Kings 16:3
Zimri kills all of Baasha's family	I Kings 16:11
Ahab's family will die	I Kings 21:19
Jehu kills all of Ahab's family	II Kings 9,10

Jehu's throne would last four generations
Fourth generation assassinated

II Kings 10:30
II Kings 15:10,12

Three more assassinations before Israel fell meant that the line of succession was continually broken. In contrast, Judah's succession was unbroken. The writer editorializes that God was not willing to destroy David's dynasty because of the covenant he had made.

Jehu vigorously destroyed Ahab's family. He killed prophets of Baal, destroyed Baal-worship, and desecrated their temple, making it a public toilet; however, he kept the golden calves. The promise that his descendants would be kings to the fourth generation was fulfilled in Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, and Zechariah, none of whom were obedient kings. Zechariah ruled six months before his assassination, and Jehu's succession ended. Hosea confirmed that Jehu overdid the judgments and so his dynasty was brought to an end.

In contrast, John's gospel speaks of Christ's mercy: God sent his son into the world not to judge, but to save. Christ judges justly because he carries out God's will, he looks beneath the surface, and does not judge by human standards. Our model when called to make judgments needs to copy Christ, not Jehu.

Do I exercise discernment rather than condemnation?

Joash — II Kings 11-12, II Chronicles 23-24, Matthew 2:16



Antoine Coypels, Athaliah Expelled from the Temple

Joash was preserved as an infant foreshadowing Christ's preservation in the slaughter of innocents. Though his brothers died, he became king as a young child, started well, cleansed the temple, but eventually turned away into sin.

Power-hungry Queen Athaliah reminds us of King Herod who ordered the massacre of the innocents. Related to Israelite King Ahab, she married the prince of Judah, and had an evil influence. When her husband became king, he killed his brothers,

and he ruled so badly, no one regretted his death. When her son Azariah became King, she encouraged his wrong-doing. When he was murdered, she attempted to kill the royal heirs, failing to kill Joash only because he was rescued by his aunt.

Jehoiada, the priest who killed Athaliah and installed the seven-year-old Joash as king, lived until he was 130 years old and was honored by burial among kings. While he lived, King Joash supported temple restoration and repair, but as soon as Jehoiada died, Joash failed. He resisted Jehoiada's son Zechariah's prophetic words against Asherah poles, and ordered Zechariah to be stoned. The story did not end well for Joash who was wounded in battle, and then assassinated on his sickbed by his own officers.

Christ spoke of this when he said the generation he was preaching to would be guilty of all the murders from Abel to Zechariah. Since the Hebrew scriptures place Chronicles last, Zechariah is the final murder of an innocent man. Christ's lesson is for us to be humble enough to listen to prophetic voices, not to resist them.

Do I listen for God in those who speak to me and not resist them?

The Eternal Kingdom — II Kings 13, 14, John 11:25



Jan Nagel, The miracle at the grave of Elisha

Elisha's story foreshadows Christ's resurrection. Even his death became a sign of hope. In the midst of political chaos as Israel continued to decline and head toward destruction and exile, Elisha continued to faithfully give prophetic messages to the kings. An unnamed man was in the process of being buried, but since enemies

surprised them, his friends put him in Elisha's tomb. Upon touching Elisha's bones, he returned to life.

This is one of three resurrection stories in the Hebrew scriptures, and they compare to stories in Christ's life. Christ raised Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Nain, just as Elijah and Elisha raised children to life. Then Christ raised Lazarus. These stories make Christ's resurrection the seventh of scripture. His was qualitatively different, because he will never die.

Our experiences of illness and healing have a similar connectivity to the power of the resurrection. I will never forget the powerful experience of my sister Beverly's healing. When she was eighteen she had convulsions, went into a coma, and doctors predicted either death or significant brain damage. When she opened her eyes at first she could not speak and was like a small child. Over several months she regained her memory and her abilities, and she went to college the next year. No one would have known that she had suffered such a significant and life-threatening illness. For us, this was a resurrection that built our faith.

Do I celebrate Christ's promise of resurrection?

Obedience and Failure — II Kings 15-16, II Chronicles 26-28, John 3:36



Rembrandt van Rijn, King Uzziah Stricken with Leprosy

Kings in Judah alternated between obedience and disobedience, showing the same ambivalence we have today. Christ called us to obedience and warned that

judgment awaits the disobedient. All these kings—Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz—had the benefit of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry warning them and calling them to obedience. Micah preached in the time of Jotham and Ahaz. It was as though the final crisis came closer, and God increased the number of strong voices, amplifying his warnings.

Uzziah began well. He had many accomplishments, listened to the prophet Zechariah, built towers and cisterns, defeated surrounding enemies, and had engineers build machines to defend his towers. Then, in pride he took on the priestly role, and was struck with leprosy and knew it was God’s judgment. He lived in quarantine and never could enter the temple again, nor could he be buried in the royal cemetery. Uzziah’s son Jotham became co-regent, lived in obedience, and in consequence became powerful.

In contrast, Jotham’s son Ahaz returned to idolatry and suffered defeats. Judah and Israel went to war, and Judah lost. In a precursor to just war theory, a prophet told the returning Israelite soldiers they had gone too far by killing their enemies without mercy and all heaven was disturbed. A further encounter served as preview to Geneva Convention standards for treating prisoners of war.

In II Kings Christ appears in the background as a judge carrying out the rulings from the law. The people had been warned of the consequences of breaking the covenant. Obedience brought victory and blessing, and disobedience brought defeat. Christ would come and take that defeat on himself on the cross, and would restore a path to blessing through the resurrection. Meanwhile, the people were on a path to destruction and exile.

Am I eager to obey and live within God’s blessing?

The Fall of Israel — II Kings 17, Matthew 25:31-32



William Brasey Hole, The Fall of Samaria

The judgment that fell on Israel foreshadows end-time judgment. Christ will make a separation between those who love him and those who do not. In this case, judgment meant the loss of identity as part of the kingdom foreshadowing Christ's future kingdom, a loss of being members of Israel and heirs of the promises to Abraham, Moses and David.

The last Kings of Israel, Pekah and Hoshea, met their doom from Assyria. Judah had about 135 more years of existence than Israel before she went into exile. But unlike Israel, she returned in a great act of God's mercy and faithfulness to fulfill his promise to David of an eternal kingdom.

This climactic moment of judgment had been warned of ever since the giving of the law. Repeated warnings came through Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Micah, and all went unheeded. Instead the people and their kings continued their idolatry. Hoshea, subservient to Assyria, conspired with Egypt, and after a three-year siege, lost his kingdom. Israel was taken away and Samaritans were resettled from various places in Assyria. The ten tribes of Israel disappeared, assimilated into the pagan culture to which they were taken.

In our time we have had many instances of evil that seem even more ferocious than that which brought about Israel's end . For example, Stalin imprisoned about 14 million innocent people in the Gulag. One of the survivors who gave prophetic witness was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and he described evil in a way that warns us all:

“If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

Do I ask God to show me the evils in my heart?

Hezekiah — II Kings 18-19, II Chronicles 29-31, John 2:13-15



Vincent López Portaña, Hezekiah showing off his wealth to envoys of the Babylonian king

Hezekiah foreshadowed Christ as a sanctifier as each one engaged in cleansing the temple. Jesus cracked a whip and knocked over tables to take the Temple from a den of thieves back to a place of worship. Hezekiah called for repentance, organizing a group which took sixteen days to clean out the mess. Consecrated with worship, he then reinstated a Passover celebration which motivated people to tear down pagan altars and give generously to temple maintenance.

Several prayers are recorded, including one for deliverance from the attacking Assyrians, and another for healing when he was dying. When he was healed he became arrogant instead of grateful. Fortunately, he repented, but not before inappropriately showing his treasures to Babylonian messengers. He failed to pass on his faith to his son Manasseh and was complacent that the Babylonian conquest would fall on his descendants. While his temple-cleansing offers much to admire, his pride serves as a warning.

When I have seen a situation that seems impossible and overwhelming, Hezekiah's story encourages me to not give up, but to keep praying. His miraculous healing experience is repeated three times—in II Kings, II Chronicles, and Isaiah—highlighting its importance.

Do I pray in faith?

The Remarkable Rescue — II Kings 20, II Chronicles 32, John 15:7



Julius Schnorr von Karolsfeld, Jerusalem Delivered from Sennacherib

Judah's rescue from enemies foreshadows Christ's rescue through the cross. Ten years after the fall of Israel, the King of Assyria attacked Judah and forced Hezekiah to pay tribute. Judean leaders despaired, and listened to the mockery of Assyrian representatives who boasted of their strength and successful conquests.

In this dark moment Hezekiah prayed and sought the prophet Isaiah's wisdom. Isaiah assured him the enemy would return home, the king would be assassinated by his sons, and his army would fail to enter Jerusalem. Miraculously, all these things happened, an utterly astonishing reversal in an impossible situation. God's angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians without a battle. Nor did they suffer more threats, since the king returned to Nineveh and was murdered by his sons.

We can take heart that God gives victories if we trust him. It is not our strength or wisdom that make a difference, it is our confidence in asking for his help. Christ has already won the victory over our spiritual foes, and we can ask for that to be made evident in our lives.

Do I trust God for miraculous victories?

Josiah — II Kings 21-23, II Chronicles 33-35, I Peter 1:15-16



Leoneart Bramer, The Scribe Shaphan Reading the Book of the Law to King Josiah

Josiah foreshadows Christ as sanctifier in restoring true worship and in restoring love for God's word. He tore down pagan shrines, cleansed and repaired the temple, found the missing scriptures, read them aloud and committed the people to obedience. This near-to-last Judean King celebrated Passover better than any since Samuel's time.

Temple worship had deteriorated since Hezekiah's cleansing. Utensils were used to worship Baal, Asherah and heavenly forces. Prostitutes wove coverings for an Asherah pole, and there were altars and shrines all over the country, including one for sacrificing children. Josiah's purification, parallel to Christ's purification of the temple, could not prevent the coming judgment in the next generation when Judah was taken into captivity.

Josiah's grand-father Manasseh had sacrificed his sons in pagan rituals. His is an amazing story of 55 years of terribly wicked rule. But when taken captive in Babylon, he repented, and God restored him as king, taking him back to Judah in an amazing story of repentance. When he died, his 22-year-old son Amon was crowned, but was assassinated after two years on the throne.

Josiah may have been influenced by his penitent grandfather during his first six years of life, but an even stronger influence was a prophetic voice. Josiah became king at eight, began to seek God at sixteen, and set out to reform Israel at seventeen. Jeremiah started preaching when Josiah was 21, a great voice joining him to promote reform. The priest Hilkiah found the Mosaic scriptures in the temple, which served as an inspiration to their reform movement. It is possible that this priest is the same Hilkiah who was Jeremiah's father, and who could have influenced both of these towering reformers.

I am captivated by this story of repentance, reform, and return to love for scripture and God himself. Manasseh did not see the triumph of Josiah's efforts to return people to faith in life, but perhaps he celebrated in heaven as the great evils he had introduced were scrubbed away. No matter what the past may have been, there is always hope.

Do I depend on scripture as a motivator for cleaning and reform?

**The Destruction of Jerusalem — II Kings 24-25, II Chronicles 36,
Luke 19:41-44**



James Tissot, Flight of the Prisoners

The destruction of the temple foreshadowed Christ's death just as he had prophesied. Christ's death was followed by resurrection, and the destroyed temple was rebuilt. That was the second and final destruction. This was the first one and it would be rebuilt when the captivity was over.

What did it mean after so many years of emphasis on the temple as the meeting place with God for it to be destroyed? God's people had to learn to worship him without a particular house in which to do so.

We need to picture as we read that Jeremiah was confronting these kings with his harsh warnings of coming destruction. But they refused to listen. Jehoiakim burned Jeremiah's scroll, section by section, without fear or repentance. King Zedekiah had confidential conversations with Jeremiah re what was coming, but kept him in prison and even allowed him to be placed in a muddy cistern. The kings and the people did not listen or repent, and the tragic captivity came.

But the captivity cured the tendency to build pagan altars. The Jews become known for their faith expressed through scripture study, community life, prayer, and economic generosity. When the temple was restored, these lessons remained, and even when once again destroyed after Christ's ministry, these expressions of faith continued until today.

Temple destruction occurred on the 7th to the 9th day of the 5th month, or the month of Av. Because the Jewish calendar is lunar, the date varies between the end of July and beginning of August. The second temple destruction in 70 AD occurred on the same day. Strangely, numerous subsequent Jewish tragedies occurred on this same day which is why *Tisha B'Av* continues as a day of repentance.

Just as the Law promised, despite their sins, God would show mercy and restore the people. The very end of II Chronicles takes the story to the moment of the proclamation to return to the land. These same verses are repeated in Ezra. But the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is such a climactic moment of despair and horror that Jeremiah, who had been warning this would come, wrote his poem in Lamentations to capture this terrible time.

Perhaps the real end of the story comes in Nehemiah with their profound repentance for a history of rebellion and not listening to God. They acknowledged that God's punishment was just and what they deserved. They also acknowledged God's grace, mercy, unfailing love, and greatness. They asked that all their hardships not be as nothing to him. Their prayer is our prayer.

Am I quick to repent?