

May 3: 1 Kings 3-5 and Luke 22:1-26

Solomon makes a treaty with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter. At this point, people are worshipping all over the place because there is no temple to worship. The LORD appears to Solomon asking him what he wants since he is now king. Solomon asks for wisdom to lead God's people. God responds that since Solomon did not ask for riches, long life, or the defeat of his enemies, God will grant him his request of wisdom. Additionally, God will grant him riches, long life, and the defeat of his enemies.

Solomon displays his wisdom by making the correct judgment on a seemingly impossible situation. Two women claim ownership over one child. Since there were no DNA tests or anything like that, Solomon uses some trickery to determine the real mother. He orders the child be cut into two pieces. The woman that requested the child be given to the other lady and not be harmed is given the child. Clearly, she is the mother since she did not want any harm to befall the baby.

The Israelites are living in times of great abundance. There is rejoicing all around. Since they are enjoying such prosperous times, it is time to build a temple for God. Solomon has logs brought in from Lebanon and puts a work force together to build the temple. They gather the materials, quarry the stone, and prepare the timber and stone for construction.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus is brought before Pilate. Pilate cannot find anything to charge Jesus on. He finds out that Jesus was Galilean, so he sends Him to Herod, who just happens to be visiting. Herod was excited to have the chance to meet Jesus. He was under the impression that maybe Jesus would do a trick for him. Herod becomes frustrated when Jesus remains silent and does not perform any miracles for him. So, he sends Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate still does not have anything to charge Jesus with, but he is in a hard spot. These people will not stop crying out for Jesus' blood regardless of his findings so far. He tries to placate the crowd by having Jesus beaten, thinking that when they see Him bloodied and bruised they will have sympathy for Him. Pilate was wrong in that assumption. The people cry for Barabbas a murderer and a thug to be released. They chose a murderer over the Messiah.

May 4: 1 Kings 6-7 and Luke 23:27-38

Having gathered all the supplies, Solomon sets out to construct the Temple Complex. The temple construction took seven years. Chapter six details the skills used by these people to construct the temple. One thing to note is that the rocks for the walls were cut to their exact measurement where they were quarried so that there was not excessive noise at the Temple construction site. These blocks were huge. If you have the opportunity to visit the only remnant of the Temple, the Western Wall, you will see just how large these stones are. The fact that the Israelites were able to precisely measure and cut off site and construct with no issues at the complex shows just how skilled they are.

Solomon also constructs his palace complex. It takes 13 years to complete it. Both the Temple and the palace are ornate and priceless. There is so much brass used for construction that Solomon does not even measure it. He is sparing no expense in the construction of God's

Temple and the palace. The Israelites have it incredibly good at this point in their history. God reiterates His covenant with David to Solomon, but He puts a condition on it this time. God promises that if he will walk in His statutes, observe His ordinances, and keep all His commands by walking in them, then He will fulfill His promise to David. Unfortunately, over time the people will stop walking according to God's commands and abandon Him. When they are sent away and the temple is destroyed, it is not that God had failed them. Instead, they had failed God.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus continues marching to the cross. There are many women following along. Jesus looks at them and tells them that they should not weep for Him. Instead, they should weep for themselves. "If they are doing these things while the wood is green, how bad will it be when the wood is dry?" Essentially, what Jesus is saying in this comment is that if things are this bad for an innocent man in a time of peace, then they will be much worse for those who deserve judgment during a time of war.

Jesus is put up on display between two criminals. Many scoff Him. Even the leaders are taking turns mocking Him and throwing insults at Him. In those days it was common for the crime the convict was being punished for was inscribed above their heads. Jesus' inscription read "This is the King of the Jews".

May 5: 1 Kings 8-9 and Luke 23: 39-56

Solomon dedicates the temple. The priests place the ark of the covenant in the holiest of holies. When the priests come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the LORD's temple. They were not able to continue ministering because the glory of the LORD filled the place. Solomon then praises God and explains how the temple came about. It was his father that wanted to build it, but the time was not right, so God made it so Solomon would complete it.

Though the glory of the LORD fills the temple, Solomon also acknowledges that God cannot be contained to a building. He states, "even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built". Solomon understands that God is not just in that temple. He is everywhere. There is no faith placed on the temple. Instead, faith is placed on God. Over time, the people will have more faith in the temple than they do in God. This will lead to their ruin.

After the dedication, The LORD gives His response. Once again, He commands obedience from Solomon and his sons. God also promises that if they do not follow His commands, then the temple will serve as a point of mockery when the Israelites are carried off. Foreigners who pass by will ask why the temple was reduced to rubble. Then they will be reminded that it was the people that clung to other gods and worshiped and served them. So, The LORD brought ruin on them. God desires obedience. He wants us to have no other gods before Him. I find myself regularly having to ask forgiveness for putting the god of self before Him. My prayer is that we will seek Him first and worship Him first. Everything else will fall into place when we do that.

In the Luke reading, Jesus is mocked by one of the prisoners. He tells Jesus to save Himself and them. The other criminal rebukes him stating that they both deserve to be hanging there. Jesus is innocent and does not deserve what He is enduring. This criminal asks that Jesus remember

him. Jesus promises that criminal that he will be with Jesus in paradise that night. That criminal is the only person that is given a guarantee of entrance into heaven. This shows that it is never too late to come to Jesus. If we are breathing, it is never too late to repent and confess Christ as LORD.

After just a few short hours, Jesus succumbs to death. Joseph of Arimathea arranges to get Jesus' body and places Him in a tomb. He was able to do some of the burial preparation, but not all of it. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph to see where the body was placed. Their intent is to come back and finish the burial rites later. They will not be able to fulfill that mission.

May 6: 1 Kings 10-11 and Luke 24: 1-35

Solomon's fame is spreading far and wide. The Queen of Sheba arrives bringing gifts and testing Solomon's knowledge. He knows the answer to every single question she asks. The Queen of Sheba responds by singing praises about how God has favored Solomon. After a time, she heads back home.

The nation is blessed. They continue to become richer and richer. Solomon has shields, utensils, and other common things made from gold since it is so abundant in the land. There is so much gold that silver is considered as common as rocks. Things are going great for Solomon and his kingdom. Truly he has been blessed by The LORD.

We see Solomon start to slip up, though. He has gone against God's command to not intermarry. He winds up taking multiple wives from multiple nations. As he gets older, these wives draw him away from God and get him to worship their false gods. Solomon builds high places to worship these detestable gods. As smart as Solomon was and as blessed as his kingdom was, he still failed to serve God fully. As a result, the kingdom is going to split. It will not happen during Solomon's lifetime, but it will happen shortly after he passes.

Hadad, an Edomite that had fled earlier, returns to Edom and begins causing problems for Solomon. One thing to note about the Edomites is that they are ancestors of Esau, the brother cheated out of his blessing by Jacob, the founder of Israel. Though David had driven them out of the land, Hadad escaped as a young boy, moved to Egypt, and married the Pharaoh's sister-in-law.

God reveals to Jeroboam that He is going to split the kingdom. Jeroboam will wind up commanding 10 of the tribes of Israel. Solomon learns of God's plan and tries to have Jeroboam killed. Jeroboam flees to Egypt for protection.

In the New Testament reading, the women go back to the tomb to finish burial rites for Jesus. When they get there, they see the tomb is empty. They are informed of Jesus' glorious resurrection. They run to the disciples to tell them what has happened and they dismiss it as nonsense. Of course it sounded like nonsense to them. However, Peter goes to check and sees the body is not there.

Two men were traveling to Emmaus. As they are going along, Jesus joins them. They do not recognize Him at first. They have a nice talk about their hope that He would have redeemed Israel, but instead was brutally murdered. When they stop to eat, they recognize Him by the way He breaks the bread. As soon as they realize who He is, He disappears.

May 7: 1 Kings 12-13 and Luke 24:36-53

The names can get a little confusing since Rehoboam and Jeroboam are relatively similar. These events are happening at around the same time. However, to cut down on my confusion, we will talk about one man at a time.

Solomon has died. Rehoboam takes the throne. The whole assembly of Jerusalem asks that he lighten their yoke. Solomon had used some pretty brutal tactics on his labor force. The people are asking for a break. Rehoboam does the sensible thing and asks for some time to decide. He then consults the wise men that had served his father. It is a genius move since they had more experience with his father's leadership style. They advise that he lighten the people's load and they will follow Rehoboam no problem. He also asks his friends what to do. Their advice is that he make life even more difficult on the people. Rehoboam chooses to make life difficult for them. We read that it was ordained by God that he would make this decision, since it will be the impetus to split the kingdom.

Jeroboam learns that Solomon is dead, so he heads back to Jerusalem. When the people learn that he has returned, they summon him and make him king over Israel. The only tribe to remain faithful to the house of David is the tribe of Judah. Even though the other tribes are not following Rehoboam, they are still traveling to Jerusalem to worship and make sacrifice at the temple. Jeroboam sees this and worries that the people will all eventually turn back to the house of David. So, he sets up two golden calf statues for the people to worship at rather than traveling to Jerusalem. He even directly quotes from Exodus when the golden calf was revealed, "Here is your god Jerusalem, the one that brought you out of Egypt." Further, he built shrines on the high places and set up priests from families outside of the Levites. He drove the people into idolatry. This will not end well.

We read about the old prophet and the man of God. The prophet is told not to eat or drink until he gets to a specific place. When he runs into the man of God, he is asked to stay and eat bread with him. When the prophet explains that he has been told by God to not eat or drink, the man of God lies, saying that God had given him word that the prophet was supposed to stop and eat and drink with him. The prophet just took this at face value, going to the man's house and dining. As a result, judgment is pronounced on the prophet and he is mauled when he leaves town. Sometimes in life people are going to come to us and say "God told me this or that" about us. God very well may have told them that, but it is in our best interest to consult The LORD when that happens. The prophet should have not just accepted the word of the man. Instead, he should have prayed to God and asked His guidance.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus presents Himself to the disciples. They are amazed at what they see. To prove that He is no mere apparition, Jesus also eats with them. Jesus remained with them for a while, but He then ascended to heaven. There was much rejoicing from the disciples.

May 8: 1 Kings 14-15 and John 1:1-28

We have the two kingdoms now. Israel is the northern kingdom. Judah is the southern kingdom. Jerusalem is within Judah's territory. As we go through the next few historical books in the Old Testament, the narrative will shift between kingdoms.

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel when the kingdom split. He has been an indecisive and double minded leader his entire reign. His son Abijah becomes sick. He approaches his wife, telling her she needs to disguise herself and speak to Ahijah. Ahijah was the one that told Jeroboam he would become king of the northern tribes. It seems odd that Jeroboam would not want his wife to be recognized by this man that brought good news. This shows just how double minded he is. The LORD sends message to Ahijah, who can't see anyway, that Jeroboam's wife is coming to find out the fate of her son. Unfortunately, the news is not good. Jeroboam has done evil in The LORD's sight. He has made false gods and practiced idolatry. As a result, his house will eventually be ruined. When she enters back into the city, her son dies, just as Ahijah had foretold. Jeroboam dies and his son Nadab becomes king.

In Judah, the southern kingdom, Rehoboam is king. He reigns for 17 years. Unfortunately, Judah does evil in The LORD's sight, engaging in the pagan and detestable actions of the nations God drove out of the land. The king of Egypt wages war with Rehoboam. He loots the treasuries of the LORD's temple and the royal palace. Since Egypt's king took all of the golden shields, they are replaced with bronze shields. The nation is losing its wealth and strength because of its detestable practices. Gone are the days that gold is so abundant that silver is treated like rock. Rehoboam dies and his son Abijam becomes king in his place.

Abijam is a terrible ruler. His reign only lasts three years. He carries on with his father's wicked practices. We are not given much detail about his death; we just know that his son Asa took his place.

Asa was a good king. He sought The LORD like David had. He reigned for 41 years. He did not remove the high places that were used for idolatry, but he did get rid of idolatry in the nation. He reigned for 41 years. His son Jehoshaphat takes his place.

Nadab's reign only lasts for two years. He did what was evil in The LORD's sight. Baasha, the son of Ahijah, kills Nadab and takes the throne. When he becomes king, he eliminates the entire house of Jeroboam, just as it had been foretold. Baasha reigns for 24 years, but he too is known as a king that does evil in God's sight.

In the New Testament reading, John gives the explanation of exactly who Jesus is. Jesus is God. He has been around since the very beginning. He came into the world to give it light. We also read about John's interaction with the men the Pharisees sent. It has been 400 years since the last prophet's words were written. Generations have passed, but the hope that the Messiah is coming soon remains. The Pharisees have heard about John and what he is doing, so they send people to interview him, thinking that John just might be the Messiah. He explains that he is not the Messiah, he is merely there to prepare the way.

May 9: 1 Kings 16-18 and John 1:29-51

Jehu is sent by The LORD to confront Baasha. The LORD pronounces judgment against him. He dies and Elah takes the throne. Elah rains for two years. One of his trusted men, Zimri, conspires against him, killing him and taking Elah's place. As soon as he took the throne, Zimri strikes down the entire house of Baasha. Zimri was only king for seven days. He is assassinated when the people learn that he had conspired against Elah.

Omri becomes king after him. He bears the distinction of being the vilest king up to this point. He is succeeded by Ahab. Not to be outdone by his father, Ahab is even more evil than his father and the kings before him. He marries Jezebel and then proceeds to serve Baal and worship him.

This all leads to a severe drought in the land. Elijah approaches Ahab and lets him know what is about to happen. The LORD sends Elijah to the Wadi Cherish where it enters the Jordan. While he is there, the ravens bring him his food. Eventually, the river dries up and then he goes to Zarephath where he resides with a widow and her son. Prior to his arrival, the widow was prepared to have one last meal with her son. While Elijah is there with them, they never run out of flour or oil. The three are sustained during this tumultuous time. The woman's son dies, but Elijah resuscitates him. Even though there is a lot of bad stuff being done against God and there's trouble in the land, God makes a way for the righteous.

Elijah presents himself to Ahab. Ahab accuses Elijah for causing the drought. Elijah explains that it is Ahab that has caused the drought to happen. He is the one that had abandoned The LORD. Elijah was merely the messenger. Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest. They will go to Mount Carmel and make a sacrifice. Whoever's sacrifice is consumed with fire is the One True God. All the Israelites gathered to watch the 450 prophets of Baal go up against Elijah. They build their altar, but their bull, and proceed to call on Baal. There is no answer. They get to the point that they are cutting themselves and tearing their clothes. This wailing goes on long enough that Elijah begins mocking Baal. At one point, he says they should yell louder because maybe Baal is resting. "Resting" was a Jewish euphemism for using the bathroom. Baal never answers. Elijah reconstructs the altar, places 12 stones to represent the 12 tribes, and digs a moat around the altar. He cuts up the bull, places it on the altar, and then has water poured all over it, to the point the moat was filled with water. Elijah calls upon The LORD. The LORD responds by consuming the sacrifice by fire. Yahweh proves Himself to these people. The prophets of Baal are rounded up and executed. Now that the people recognize Yahweh is the One True God, the drought has ended. Unfortunately, these people will soon forget the goodness of God.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus approaches John for baptism. John proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Andrew, the first disciple follows Jesus. He takes his brother Simon, also known as Peter, to Jesus. Philip and Nathanael are called. Nathanael comes from a rather small area in Galilee. He shows a bit of a double standard when he asks if anything good can come out of Nazareth. Nazareth was not a large town, but neither was Cana. God can use whatever, no matter how big or how small, for His glory and honor. Never doubt what He can do, He is in the habit of making common things holy!

May 10: 1 Kings 19-20 and John 2

After the great display of God's might and the shameful defeat of the prophets of Baal, Ahab takes the news to his wife, Jezebel. Jezebel is enraged and decides that she will kill Elijah just as the prophets of Baal were. Elijah runs for his life. He leaves his servant in Judah and journeys into the wilderness alone. While he is there, God provides bread and water for him. The LORD commands Elijah to journey 40 days and 40 nights to get to Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, is where God had given Moses the Ten Commandments. While he is there, God promises that He will leave 7,000 people in Israel. These are the people that did not bow down to Baal. Elijah leaves and on his travels finds Elisha, the one that will succeed him.

Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, assembles his troops to fight against Israel. Ahab is still the king at the time. Ahab has been the most evil and wicked ruler the Israelites have had so far. Despite this fact, God still hands the victory over to Israel and not Aram.

In the New Testament reading, Jesus, His mother, and some of the disciples attend a wedding in Cana. Unfortunately, the wedding party runs out of wine. This was a huge social faux pas back in this time. Mary, Christ's mother, approaches Him, informing Him that there is no wine. Jesus asks what it has to do with Him since His time has not yet come. Nevertheless, Jesus turns the water into wine. In those days it was common to bring out the more expensive wine first and use the inferior wine later in the ceremony. This wine that Jesus made was superior to what they started with. Sometimes God saves the best for last!

Jesus goes with His disciples to the Temple complex in Jerusalem. He sees the money changers and folks selling animals. John makes the point that Christ takes the time to fashion a whip out of chords. This shows that His response was not an made in the heat of the moment. Instead, it was well thought out. Further, He does not destroy anything. He merely flips the tables and tells the folks with the animals to get the out of there.