



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

What Child Is This?

Part 4

January 17, 2021

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

As we ended last week's study, we learned that while Samuel was still very young, God chose him to be His special servant and he grew up to be His prophet. Samuel also served as a priest and was a leader in Israel for his entire life. Because his time as Israel's leader immediately followed the period of time in which judges ruled, he is sometimes called the last of Israel's judges. When Samuel was getting old, all the surrounding lands were ruled by kings. Because of this, the Israelites also wanted to have the same kind of governance. So, the leaders of Israel's tribes asked Samuel to choose a king to rule over them.

Now, Samuel didn't really like this idea because he believed a king wouldn't treat the people well. **1 SAM 8:7-18 (The Message Bible)** describes in detail what happened at this point in the history of Israel: *God answered Samuel, "Go ahead and do what they're asking. They are not rejecting you. They've rejected me as their King. From the day I brought them out of Egypt until this very day they've been behaving like this, leaving me for other gods. And now they're doing it to you. So let them have their own way. But warn them of what they're in for. Tell them the way kings operate, just what they're likely to get from a king."* So Samuel told them, delivered God's warning to the people who were asking him to give them a king. He said, *"This is the way the kind of king you're talking about operates. He'll take your sons and make soldiers of them—chariotry, cavalry, infantry, regimented in battalions and squadrons. He'll put some to forced labor on his farms, plowing and harvesting, and others to making either weapons of war or chariots in which he can ride in luxury. He'll put your daughters to work as beauticians and waitresses and cooks. He'll conscript your best fields, vineyards, and*

orchards and hand them over to his special friends. He'll tax your harvests and vintage to support his extensive bureaucracy. Your prize workers and best animals he'll take for his own use. He'll lay a tax on your flocks and you'll end up no better than slaves. The day will come when you will cry in desperation because of this king you so much want for yourselves. But don't expect God to answer."

Putting a king in place to rule over them was a major change in the history of the Israelites. For a long time they had been a loosely connected group of tribes with one God but separate leaders. Now, they were about to become a single nation made up of tribes united, not only by one God, but also under a king. This is similar to all other nations of the world at that time.

The people of ancient Israel were ruled by kings from the time of Saul (about 1030 to 1010 B.C.) and David (1010 to 970 B.C.) to the reign of Zedekiah (597 to 587 B.C.). Some of the kings were strong rulers who remained faithful to God. But other kings actually led the people away from worshiping Him, made bad agreements with Israel's enemies, and treated the people cruelly and unfairly. (To read more about the history of the kings read 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles where it is re-told).

As the first king of Israel, Saul started out well, but then began not to obey God. This resulted in his kingdom and royal line being taken away from him. There is no other man in the Bible who had so many chances to make a success of his life and miss so many of them, as Saul. He not only missed great opportunities, he also deliberately abused them. His sun rose in splendor, but set in a tragic night!! What ruined his life? Pride, egotism, and the abuse of power leading to moral degradation and ruin. It is a familiar story.

Saul's had success at the start of his reign but soon things began to go wrong. He became very jealous of a young man named David (who went on to become the next king!) and his jealousy consumed him so much that he totally stopped obeying God's commands. Saul's jealousy of David, his bad decisions, and the growing strength of his enemies, caused Saul to become deeply depressed. His troubled mind made him physically ill and soon, he became incapable of ruling over Israel.

God was extremely unhappy with Saul as we learn in **(1 SAM 15:10-11 The Message Bible): Then God spoke to Samuel: "I'm sorry I ever made Saul king. He's turned his back on me. He refuses to do what I tell him." Samuel was angry when he heard this. He prayed his anger and disappointment all through the night. He got up early in the morning to confront Saul but was told, "Saul's gone. He went to Carmel to set up a victory monument in his own honor, and then was headed for Gilgal." By the time Samuel caught up with him, Saul had just finished an act of worship, having used Amalekite plunder for the burnt offerings sacrificed to God.** Saul even went so far as to try to have David killed, but David ran away. When the tables were turned and David had a chance to kill Saul – he wouldn't do it. David believed it would be wrong to kill the king. Saul's life ended badly: he was defeated by the Philistines, the sworn enemies of Israel.

After that, God gave the kingdom of Israel to David. God also made certain promises to David. One such promise was that one day, God would establish an eternal throne for one of David's descendants: ***Someday your life will come to an end. You will join the members of your family who have already died. Then I will make one of your own sons the next king after you. And I will make his kingdom secure. He is the one who will build a house where I will put my Name. I will set up the throne of his kingdom. It will last forever. (2 SAM 7:12-13 New International Reader's Version)***. But the reign of a specific descendant was not guaranteed. The general promise was that if David's descendants listened and followed God's Voice, they would be established. But if they rebelled, they would be tormented and replaced as kings.

And that was how the history of the Davidic royal line played out until Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim and Nehushta. Jehoiachin who was also called Jeconiah, and Coniah. So, are you wondering why he was called by three different names in the Bible?? There are a couple of theories. One is that the spelling of his name was different in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Babylonian. Another is that those who copied the Hebrew Bible may not have faithfully copied his name.

Jehoiachin became king at 18 years old, but only reigned for three months. During his very short reign, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, surrounded Jerusalem with soldiers in an attempt to capture the city. King Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived during the siege, and King Jehoiachin, all of his officials, and the queen mother surrendered to him. (YIKES!!) The surrender was accepted, and Jehoiachin was imprisoned in Babylon. We learn about this in ***2 KIN 24:10-12: At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. Then Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, his mother, his servants, his commanders, and his officials. And the king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.***

After that, King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, to be the next king. He also changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah. Jehoiachin remained in prison, in exile, throughout Nebuchadnezzar's entire reign. This is what took place after Nebuchadnezzar's death: ***When Jehoiachin king of Judah had been in exile for thirty-seven years, Evil-Merodach became king in Babylon and let Jehoiachin out of prison. This release took place on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. The king treated him most courteously and gave him preferential treatment beyond anything experienced by the other political prisoners held in Babylon. Jehoiachin took off his prison garb and for the rest of his life ate his meals in company with the king. The king provided everything he needed to live comfortably. (2 Kings 25:27-30 The Message Bible)*** So, King Jehoiachin ended up being treated as royalty. None of his descendants had ever risen again to the throne of Israel.

{to be continued}